

## Tommy and Tubbo's super big dream list!

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/33343711) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/33343711>.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Rating:           | <a href="#">General Audiences</a>   |
| Archive Warnings: | <a href="#">Major Character Death</a> , <a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>   |
| Fandom:           | <a href="#">Minecraft (Video Game)</a>  |
| Relationships:    | <a href="#">Ranboo &amp; Toby Smith   Tubbo</a> , <a href="#">Toby Smith   Tubbo &amp; TommyInnit</a>   |
| Characters:       | <a href="#">Toby Smith   Tubbo</a> , <a href="#">TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">mentioned - Character</a> , <a href="#">Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Phil Watson (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Wilbur Soot</a> , <a href="#">Alexis   Quackity</a>  |
| Additional Tags:  | <a href="#">Toby Smith   Tubbo-centric</a> , <a href="#">Sad Toby Smith   Tubbo</a> , <a href="#">Dead TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Alternate Universe - Modern Setting</a> , <a href="#">characters but irl</a> , <a href="#">Platonic Relationships</a> , <a href="#">Running Away</a> , <a href="#">Bucket List</a> , <a href="#">Implied/Referenced Drug Use</a> , <a href="#">Trans Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">not mentioned in the first chap but its there</a> , <a href="#">Pneumonia</a> , <a href="#">Road Trips</a> , <a href="#">Grief/Mourning</a> , <a href="#">bee duo</a> , <a href="#">grand canyon - Freeform</a> , <a href="#">No Romance</a> , <a href="#">Haunted Houses</a> , <a href="#">Ghosts</a> , <a href="#">Survivor Guilt</a> , <a href="#">Hospitals</a> , <a href="#">Smoking</a> , <a href="#">Implied/Referenced Drug Addiction</a> , <a href="#">quackity is in his own world</a> , <a href="#">Tattoos</a> , <a href="#">Hitchhiking</a> , <a href="#">Dialogue Heavy</a> |
| Language:         | English   |
| Series:           | Part 1 of <a href="#">Oneshots/ Pilots/ Glorified Prompts</a>   |
| Collections:      | <a href="#">This destroyed me on an emotional level... Do it again.</a>   |
| Stats:            | Published: 2021-08-19 Completed: 2022-01-01 Words: 30,185 Chapters: 5/5   |

# Tommy and Tubbo's super big dream list!

by [whoknowsident](#)

## Summary

At the age of ten, best friends Tommy and Tubbo created a bucket list of places they wanted to visit when they grew up.

At the age of seventeen, Tubbo- with the help of a mysterious stranger that goes by the name of Ranboo- set out on a mission to spread his dead best friend's ashes at all five places.

## Notes

I don't know what possessed me to write this, I don't know what makes me think I want to finish it. Who knows.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# The Grand Canyon

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy and Tubbo lived in the same town for their entire lives. And when you live somewhere for your entire life, you learn things, repeat things, memorize things, until eventually you know every street, every building, every nook and cranny like the back of your hand. And by the age of ten, the two boys had claimed this town as their own personal playground, with all the best playspots, hiding spots, food spots, everything on a visual map in their heads. The two boys knew how to *live* in that town.

They also knew that every wednesday during the month of July, the sun would set at just the right point, that it would reflect against the lake in just the right way, and it would shine brighter than a million stars. They knew the best time, they knew the best spot, they knew the best view.

And so every wednesday, the boys would sneak out to their favorite spot- an old park bench- and watch the sunset over the lake.

Tonight was no exception. Tubbo was kicking his small legs back and forth, drawing in a sweater and overalls that were a couple of sizes too big for him, and his hair was freshly dyed blonde, though Tommy's messy job left a considerable amount of brown patches still showing. As for Tommy, he was practically bouncing off of his seat. Both of his sneakers were untied, bandaids littered his knees, arms, and face, and his wide grin brandished a missing tooth gap.

Somewhere amongst the squabbling and giggles, Tommy pulled out a notebook and crayons from his backpack. Tubbo looked at it curiously.

"We gotta make a bucket list!" he screamed and flipped the book to the first page. Almost immediately, he started scribbling little doodles and swirls around the edges of the page.

"A bucket list?" Tubbo asked, peeking curiously at the page.

“Like a, like a list of places we gotta visit!” Tommy explained and he threw a couple of crayons over to the other.

The two worked at the list eagerly. Scribbling down location after location. World wonders, places with sentimental value, places with a breathtaking view, places that were so far beyond the town that they knew.

By the end, among a plethora of doodles and drawings, they had ten locations. All that was left to do was fill the spot at the top of the page, awaiting a title.

The two boys looked at each other for a moment before Tommy nodded, and wrote down:

‘Tommy and Tubbo’s super big dream list!’

---

Despite being a spur of the moment idea between two children, the list always stayed at the back of their minds. Of course, as they grew older, the list was pushed further and further back, under school, and work, and other endeavours. But that didn’t matter, they were still young. They had all the time in the world to finish it.

---

Not many people tend to ride the bus this late at night. It’s virtually pitch black, lest for the street lamps that animated a temporary streak of illumination with each pole they passed. The light bent across every angle of the seat in front of him, the floor, his body, until it flicked away into a cold darkness yet again. Maybe that’s one reason no one’s on the bus, that or it’s very late into the night.

If there were any people there, they weren’t uttering a peep of noise. At least, nothing over the frankly ironic pop music that was filtering in through his ratty and tangled earbuds. Maybe an old couple on vacation that still needs to get to their hotel, maybe some teenage girl sneaking off to her boyfriend’s house. He remembers earlier, some super drunk guy clambered onto the bus, but his ruckus died down as well. He could see the man’s limp hand hanging over the seat just in the middle of the rows. The bus driver was quiet, the patrons were quiet, Tubbo was quiet.

Tommy was quiet, but that's to be expected.

Tommy. Tubbo found himself clutching the backpack on his lap tighter. His multitude of keychains clattered against each other every time the bus hit a particularly large pothole in the road. Apparently there's a lot of those in Arizona. One of the keychains- a bee that Tommy had gotten him for his tenth birthday- was particularly loud as it swung against two music disk ones- those used to be Tommy's. He stole them off of the boy's car keys.

Curled up in a ball with his hands wrapped around his knees and backpack, Tubbo leaned his head against the cold glass of the bus window. Or at least tried to. The vibrations of the road created a buzzing in his brain and every time the bus so much as shifted, his head would be sent thumping against the glass. You couldn't see much outside other than desert, maybe some sedimentary mountains, but anything was better than scrolling through his phone, which was surely now filled with instagram posts worried about him and his whereabouts.

Speaking of his phone, as if on cue, it vibrated in his pocket.

Cold electric light lit up face as he turned it over into his view. It was a text from Technoblade. He had already blocked Wilbur and Phil, it hadn't even crossed his mind that Techno would be the type of person to reach out and text him. Even before all of this, their conversations would always be one worded confirmations of locations whenever he and Tommy needed a ride.

**Technoblade:** I'm not going to ask where you are. I'm not going to ask where you're going. I just want to know that you're going to be safe about it.

**Technoblade:** We're all grieving here, kid.

The lump in Tubbo's throat that seemed ever present in the past month had increased tenfold. *Technoblade* was texting him. They were *really* worried. His eyes burned with pushed back emotion, something prickly and sour that encased his eyes and sinuses, that rang in his emotions- begging for attention, yet refusing to release. He could ignore the text. He could ignore the text and solidify his plans without any hitches. He could- He could-

And before he could make any smart decisions- the first of many bad ones he had made in the past twenty four hours, he sent his best friend's brother a reply.

**Me:** I'll be safe

He could give them that, at least. He even checked it over one, two, three times for spelling errors before sending it. Technoblade didn't reply to that one, simply opting to leave the message on seen. But deep down, he knew he did the right thing.

Well, this entire situation was pretty *wrong* , but it felt right. That's Tubbo's new life mission, to feel right again.

His hands were cold. His hands were cold, and his feet were cold, and his nose was cold, which is stupid because he's in the middle of the desert right now. His hands were cold, and his very core was cold. His shivering rib cage opened up his frigid organs, his frozen lungs, his dead heart, and he was *cold*. His entire body felt as if it was dipped in a frozen lake and he was left with the eternal bite. It was horrible. It was horrible. It was horrible and he felt as if he wanted to die. Which is morbid, and evil, and a horrible thing to say considering his best friend is dead. But he's cold, and the fire inside of him was burned away along with his best friend's bones.

He was so, so cold, and he felt as if he could cry if it were not for the searing burning that came from his backpack. Like the marble of the urn was a malleable piece of molten metal that burned and bubbled his horrid cold skin through the backpack it was hidden in. He huffed and clutched the bag tighter. If this was grief, he didn't want to feel it anymore. He would much rather ignore it, or throw it away, or let himself be consumed by it whole, anything to stop the virus infecting him.

Grief was like an illness that couldn't be helped with kisses, or soup, or Tommy coming over to occupy his mind with Mario Kart. Even though that feels like the only thing that could heal him right now. But Tommy *can't* come. Thus him feeling this all in the first place. It was a horrid cycle that sucked him in, thrashing him around like a ragdoll.

Tubbo feels like dying, but he can't. Because he has to live for his friend that can't. Which makes him want to die even more. But he can't.

Cycle. Cycle. Cylce.

The song that was bellowing out from his headphones was peppy, and upbeat, and had a catchy drum beat. He remembers listening to this song when he was twelve, and his class was going on a field trip to the zoo. This song felt like a loud overbearing bus, like his best friend complaining that his braces hurt, like ice cream and lemonade, like elephants and giraffes and tigers. And this song felt like crushing a design into pennies, and throwing pellets at goats, and pocketing candy from the gift shop with snickering and conniving grins. His mother always skipped this song when it came on the radio, she said there were too many suggestive lyrics. But Tubbo liked it. Tubbo liked elephants.

The song barely had any time to finish before the bus came to a halt. The driver said something about kicking him off, but all he could hear was mumbled. He hadn't even realized that everyone else had already exited the bus at his point. He hadn't even realized that the bus *could* stop at his point. Like his state curled up in the back of this quiet, dark bus was some sort of sick purgatory, a rift in time that would never end. But here he was, stumbling down the steps into the cool desert air, bidding the driver goodbye with a nervous wave, and watching the vehicle drive away.

He was out in the middle of nowhere. It was the middle of the night. And that was his last ride to somewhere even remotely safe or civilized.

Tubbo was irrevocably fucked. But at least the Grand Canyon was pretty.

Leaning against a not so safe railing, he breathed out into the wide open world. The stars were quite beautiful, weren't they. They painted and speckled the sky and it was truly, truly breathtaking. Maybe even more so than the canyon. Though there was something spectacular about the swerves and crevasses, and striking colors that made something fizzle in his core. What else could he say? Nothing really. He couldn't say anything. Just look.

Soft air brushed against his face, reverberating off of the deep chasms of the canyons.

He hasn't cried yet. When Tommy was in the hospital, and those machines were doing more living for him than he was, he didn't cry. When the very words were uttered that his best friend had just died, he didn't cry. He didn't cry, not at the funeral, not when he was laying aimlessly in his bed, not when school started up again. He wanted to. So badly, he wanted to. He wanted to sob and bawl at the fact that his best friend was gone but he couldn't. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't, instead he was just numb. Holding his friend's limp hand, all he felt was numb. Holding Technoblade in a tight and unexpected embrace, all he felt was numb. When everyone was coddling him in his stuffy black suit at the memorial service, he felt numb.

His best friend is dead and he hasn't cried once.

Ain't that a kicker.

. . .

There's a strange man standing next to him now. Which in almost all cases should be a great cause for concern considering, one, he was a child by himself, two, it was the middle of the night, three he was in a foreign country, and four, well, combine all of those and the probability of Tubbo getting axe murdered is sounding pretty high. Wait. He's in America. The guy probably has a gun.

He should run. He should really run, considering the guy looks like he just got hit by a truck, he's a good foot and a half taller than him, and he was wearing a cloth mask on his face. Yea, that definitely wasn't promising. Who even shows up in the middle of the desert in the middle of the night anyway? . . . besides Tubbo.

He should really run now.

But the guy doesn't look all that harmful. In fact, he's kind of just minding his own business. And if Tubbo squints real hard, it looks as if the person is around his age. Maybe that whole feeling numb to grief thing is seeping into his other emotions, because he's having a hard time feeling fear right now.



Fuck it. Tubbo's always been the compulsive one with zero self preservation skills.

"How many people's ashes do you think are down there?" He speaks into the open air. His voice is loud compared to the deafening silence, almost crisp in a sense; biting. The question is gesturing towards the canyon displayed out in front of them.

The guy next to him falters for a moment, shooting a glance over to him with his eyes furrowed in confusion. He looks back over to the canyon and thinks for a moment.

"I uh- I've never really thought about that before. That's- that's a weird thing to think about," he remarks. His voice is deep in a weird, smooth type of way while also simultaneously having some hint of a rasp to it.

"Yea, I mean like, we're just looking at millions of dead bodies right now," Tubbo's eyes were wide at the view.

"I am. . .never gonna think about the Grand Canyon the same way again," the man shuddered, squinting out into the vast horizon ahead of them. He was rubbing his gloved hands together in a warming motion. If Tubbo looked really hard, he could see faint puffs of his exhales reacting with the air.

There was a pause in the conversation for a while, as both boys dissolved into only a mildly awkward silence. That was until the other boy spoke, starting up the conversation this time.

"Are you. . .out here alone?" He looked back over to Tubbo, a faint concern etched on his face.

"Nope," Tubbo replied bluntly, accentuating the popping noise at the end. With that, he swung his backpack around and unzipped it, gently retrieving and revealing a small urn. It was a light red marble, Tommy's favorite color.

“Oh,” the boy reacted, and if he wasn’t wearing the mask, Tubbo could’ve sworn he saw him frown, “I’m sorry.”

Tubbo had gotten a lot of “I’m sorry”’s lately. A statement that doesn’t mean anything or make sense, from people who don’t mean it. But for some reason, it felt as if this guy really, genuinely meant it.

“Double pneumonia,” he blurted, causing the other to startle slightly at the information being thrown around, “The doctors basically said he was drowning in his own lungs.”

He said it so casually as if it wasn’t a morbid topic that was clearly making the other person uncomfortable.

“Oh, that’s-”

“Well, that’s not what they *said*, but it was pretty much implied,” he corrected, hugging onto the urn and looking back out into the sky.

He breathed in. And out.

“We made this bucket list. Of places we wanted to go,” here it is, so quiet, colors dimmed by the veil of night but cast a cold illumination by the radiating moon, “I just remembered it existed, so I did what any rational person would do, and I downed half a bottle of ibuprofen, snuck out in the middle of the night, basically kidnapped my best friend, and took the soonest plane to America.”

. . .

“This was the first place. ‘Got four more places to go.’”

The other hummed thoughtfully.

“Where are you running to?”

The other man took a moment to form a reply.

“I’m not running to something. I’m running away from something.”

Just peeking underneath the mask, Tubbo could’ve sworn he saw the jagged end of a fresh scar, a bruise, a burn for good measure. Just because Tubbo started oversharing to this absolute stranger doesn’t mean the other guy is expected to, so he leaves it at that.

“Shitty parents?” He asks.

He chuckles.

“Shitty parents,” the other echoes in confirmation.

He doesn’t know what it is about this guy. Maybe it’s the way his grey eyes look upon the land with such innocent fondness, maybe it’s way the beanie he’s wearing on his head is ripped and torn in multiple places, yet somehow held together by an amature sewing job, maybe it’s- unlike anybody else, anybody else except for Tommy- he truly listened. He listened, and he listened like every word that came out of Tubbo’s mouth meant something. Maybe it’s how, for the first time in a month, a warmth has bloomed around him that wasn’t sourced by the urn.

“I’ll run away from something with you if you run to something with me,” he offered.

“I-” the other looked slightly baffled, that was a common occurrence considering everything Tubbo had said thus far, “Y’know what, sure.”

And if the boy weren't wearing a mask, he could've sworn he saw him smile.

They stood in silent agreement for a long while, until Tubbo started screwing off the lid of the urn, biting his lip in concentration.

"Alrighty," he huffed, as he not so gracefully hoisted himself up onto the railing. He nearly scoffed at the immediate worry that filled the other guy's demeanor. Nearly. If his mind wasn't occupied with the fact that he had missed his footing and started to slip. Before he could fall and tumble to his death, the boy wrapped his arms around his waist, not yanking him back to safety, but holding him there in a safe suspension.

Taking that as his cue, Tubbo tilted the urn and let a small portion of the contents fall into the canyon below. The ashes looked as if they were flying around as they mixed with the air on their journey to settle to the ground; their final resting place.

With the hint of a smile on his face, he leaned back and sat on the railing. The other guy didn't make any moves to let go of his waist for a moment until he deemed it safe. And then he moved to lean against the railing next to him.

"Ten minutes into knowing me and you already nearly died without me," he remarked.

Tubbo laughed. Genuine. "What would I do without you?"

He was here. Tubbo was really here. Years and years of planning and useless dreaming, and he was here. He was here. And Tommy was here. And this absolute stranger was here. And it felt as much of an end of something as it did the beginning of something.

"I don't even know your name," the boy next to him spoke.

"If you were to ask my dad, Toby. But you can call me Tubbo. What about you?"

“If you were to ask my school, Ryan. But you can call me Ranboo.”

And Tubbo smiled. In the dark, cold world his best friend had left him, he smiled. He looked down to the urn.

“And this is Tommy.”

Ranboo nodded fondly. “So,” both of them looked back out into the big, big world.

“Where’s the next place on that list?”

## Chapter End Notes

You can tell this is set in a fictional universe because they got right up to an unsupervised Grand Canyon without paying.

# The Burchard Manor

## Chapter Summary

Content warning: graphic depictions of sickness/ coughing fit (starts as "he arrived at the door to Tommy's room" and ends at the border line), self deprecation

## Chapter Notes

Jesus fuck you wanted another chapter, i'll give you another chapter. It's like I went into a dissociative state and came back eight thousand words later.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

**Tommy:** Tubbo

**Tommy:** Tubzo

**Tommy:** Tubooooo

**Tommy:** I'm siiick

**Tommy:** Come over

**Me:** yiu get sick like onse a month

**Me:** and my bed looks extra comfie rigt now

**Tommy:** Come onnn man

**Tommy:** Techno's just hauled up in his room and I'm boored

**Tommy:** I'll do ur english hw for you

**Me:** fine

**Me:** bee there in 5

**Tommy:** You're the best

The Watson household was what Tubbo would call the dictionary definition of a 'home'. Excluding all of that existential nonsense about home being a person, or a feeling, but more in the superficial sense of things.

The freshly painted walls were adorned with dozens upon dozens of family portraits spanning generations. Some- black and white- of great grandparents in their spiffy attire. Most of Phil and his three boys. Technoblade, with his more stern demeanor, most of his photos were depictions of him up on a stage, receiving awards or giving speeches, looking unappealed in every one of them. Wilbur, with more of a honey-like sweet smile, presented more domestic scenes, him curled up with his brothers watching a movie, him playing or tinkering with his instruments, sometimes even performing. Tommy was never seen without an overwhelming large toothy smile on his face, showing off his clunky braces. The energy portrayed in each and every photo he was in was so great that it almost felt as if the photos were moving as well, him roughhousing out in the yard, or with his brothers, or with his favorite stuffed animal cow. Hell, there was even a picture or two of Tubbo up there, giving into his friend's antics. Personally, his favorite photos were the ones of the Watson boys when they were babies, he loved to tease them about it.

Aside from the walls, which were a show in of itself, the furniture was old, yet cozy. A mix of blues and browns that worked well with the plethora of warm golden lights. The entire home was simultaneously tidy and messy at the same time. Everything was put together in some semblance of order, but there was a sense of unique in order to every square inch to suggest the place had truly been lived in.

Tubbo truly was envious that they had a house like this, a home. Not to say that he wasn't thankful for his two bedroom condo down the street that he lived in with his father. But it was dirty and raggedy, with dark walls, barely working appliances, and piles of trash and items all around the floor. It never really felt like a home every time he entered, not as much as the Watson's home does.

Entering the household, he slipped off his shoes at the entrance, kicking them off in a dual effort by his toes and heels. His father had said that doing that would ruin the back of them, but that didn't stop him in the slightest.

Technoblade was in the kitchen, leaning against the counter with a small mug of mac and cheese in his hands. The meal- held too close to his face- steamed up his glasses, but that did nothing to stop him from showing more spoonfuls into his mouth. Long pink hair draped over his shoulders, yet to be braided or knotted up into a bun. The color was beginning to morph into brown at the roots, similar to the color of Wilbur's hair. It was only recently that Tubbo had found out that the two weren't actually twins. That Technoblade was two months older than Wilbur, but he was adopted on Wilbur's birthday, so they just took that gag and ran with it. And who could blame Tubbo, they did look very similar when they really tried to be.

The older man looked up and greeted him with a slight nod, "Tommy's up in his room. I tried to keep him on bed rest but you know him."

Tubbo chuckled, slipping off his father's old coat and draping it on one of the coat hangers, "Got it."

"I'll be in my room all day. Just holler if you need me," he squinted his eyes, "Just. . .don't holler if you don't. I'd rather not develop a headache today."

"You got it boss man," and with that, Tubbo was bounding up the stairs, skipping the third to top one, as it always made him slip. He shuffled down the hallway on his journey to the door at the very end. Lining the walls of the upstairs hallway was another array of photos. This time there was a collection of school photos from each boy, starting at year 1 and chronologically and annually, drifting over to 6th form. (Or in Tommy's case, year 11)



Once he made it to the very end of the photos, he arrived at the door to Tommy's room. Muffled coughing could be heard through the wood.

Opening the door and letting himself into the room like he owned the place, the sight he saw was not something he expected.

Tommy was supposed to be strong and overzealous, bright and bouncy; lighting up a room with nothing but his brace filled smile and his bright blue eyes.

The boy before him was anything but.

Tommy looked so small, curled up in a shaky fetal position, his comforter wrapped tightly around him. His cherished stuffed cow in a death grip. His skin was pale and clammy, his eyes looking red and irritated. His usual bright and bouncy hair was limp against his sweaty face. Tired blue eyes slowly made their way up to him, struggling to maintain at their destination. He let out a couple of rattling coughs before speaking, which sounded comparable to a seal's barking, and shook almost as much as his frame did.

"Hey Tub," His voice was so weak, fragile, like an old weathered leaf, "M' sick," he lamented.

"I can't see that- *Tommy*, " Tubbo did nothing to hide the deep concern in his voice as he walked over to his friend's bed, "This doesn't look like a fever. When's the last time you took something?"

"Tech' gave me somethn' like n' hour 'go," Tommy's voice was wispy and wheezy, similar to each of his rattling breaths, "Yr' not 'ere to nanny. Js' wan'd to watch a mvie' or somethin'"

He was sent into another small round of coughing. It sounded painful.

“Come on, man. Let’s sit you up and get you some water,” he brought his hands onto Tommy’s arm and slowly shifting him into a sitting position against his pillows. Tommy groaned, though it didn’t like something of protest, more like something of discomfort. The coughing didn’t stop with the movement, in fact, it continued tenfold. Tommy could barely move on his own over the attacks.

Tubbo rubbed his back placatingly- feeling every vibration of his lungs- as, with his other hand, he latched onto a glass cup of water and lifted it up to Tommy’s lips. Both of Tommy’s shaking hands came up to grasp onto the glass, but they did nothing to actually hold onto it, that was all Tubbo. Tommy could only get a few sips in before the uncontrollable coughs returned, and he choked and spluttered on the water, retching it onto his shirt. Tubbo would’ve taunted him if he weren’t so worried about the fact that his friend couldn’t even drink water.

“Tubbo-” Tommy choked, before the coughs interrupted him yet again. An onslaught, one after another, back to back, not even allowing the boy a second to catch his breath. Tommy’s entire body was a victim to the coughing fit, practically immobile other than horrible shakes and tremors.

“Tommy,” Tubbo murmured, patting his back.

If he was worried by the painful coughs that were afflicting his friend, he was straight up mortified when the coughs delved into a choking, hacking noise. In a moment of pure desperation, he shouted.

“Technoblade!” he waited a moment, a moment he didn’t have time to spare,  
“TECHNOBLADE! HELP!”

A moment. A moment. And then the door was thrown open. There stood Technoblade in all his glory, his usual emotionless expression now blown wide in concern. The man had only spent eight years in the foster system, but from what Tubbo had heard, it was eight years of hell. And even now, after twelve years of being loved and coddled and a part of the Watson family, he was still quick to fight or flight. Especially when it came to his family members.  
*Especially when it came to his baby brother.*

“I don’t- I don’t know what’s happening!” Tubbo cried, “Is he having an asthma attack?” He looked back over to Tommy, who was still unresponsive. His face was wet with flowing tears, and spit was spilling over his lips, which were turning blue with lack of oxygen.

Techno ran forward to his brother, immediately adopting a stern initiative despite his panic, “It doesn’t look like an asthma attack. Tommy, can you stand?” His statements and questions were quick and back to back. Tommy could only flounder around for a couple of moments before Technoblade wordlessly picked him up bridal style, “Tubbo, grab Wil’s inhaler, a towel, and a water bottle, and then get into the car,” he ordered. And if Tubbo had learned anything from his years of knowing the Blade, it’s that you always follow his orders.

Tubbo wordlessly bolted out of the room, shooting from room to room around the house. Grabbing Wilbur’s emergency inhaler from the drawer of his bedside table, a small but thick washcloth from the upstairs bathroom, and a cold plastic water bottle from the back of their fridge. And in split seconds, he was outside and throwing himself into the back of the Watson’s family car. (More specifically, *Technoblade’s* car, as he paid for all of the insurance, but Wilbur pays for the gas, so it’s a *family* car.)

If Tommy’s or Technoblade’s minds weren’t in overdrive, at the very least Tubbo’s was. Because he blinked for a split second and suddenly they were speeding down the road, Tommy laying across the seats with his head in Tubbo’s lap. Tubbo latched onto his friend like he might cough himself off of the seat, attempting to comb through his hair to calm him, but that was probably the least noticeable thing happening right now.

Nothing could be heard over the coughing that sounded more like a shot engine more than anything.

“Dad. Family emergency.” Techno spoke into the phone he held up to his ear, his eyes remained glued to the road.

“Something’s up with Tommy, he can’t breathe. Coughing fit or something, but it’s not letting up.”

*This has to be a dream. This has to be a dream.*

“We’re on our way to the hospital now.”

Technoblade continued to talk to the person on the phone, but suddenly Tubbo’s attention was drawn to a new sound coming from his friend, a mucus like hacking. When he looked down, Tommy’s palm was up to his face, and in it was a glob of bloody phlegm he had just coughed up.

. . .

*Blood.*

“Technoblade!” Tubbo breathed, but his ears were ringing so loud, he couldn’t tell if he shouted it or if the words died on his lips.

He must’ve shouted it because the man who was currently handling a speeding vehicle turned around and shot his gaze to the two in the back. His eyes immediately landed on his brother’s hands, and his eyes went wide.

“Fuck.”

He had never heard Technoblade swear before.

---

“Alright. So basically, with PTSD, when something really shitty happens, your brain doesn’t like, want to process that, so it doesn’t stow it away as a memory. But when something happens, or you, like, see something that reminds you of that event, it brings back up those memories. But here’s the kicker. Your brain doesn’t identify that as a memory, so you straight up just think it’s happening real time.”

Tubbo and Ranboo, friends, a duo, adventurers alike found themselves situated in the cozy booth of a small diner. The diner itself was cramped in every way shape and form, the booths and tables were basically touching, the ceiling was low, and the entire room felt like a big hug. Except, like. . .the type of hug your aunt that smells like mothballs would hold you in, and shake you around, and not let you go until your father steps in. Mothballs was a good way to describe the overall feeling of the place, it was old, and yellow, and the decorations were all antiques. But maybe that was the point, the entire place was built in this old train car, and all of the waitresses were old women with smart mouths.

Ranboo sat with his gangly legs drawn up to his chest, crushed in between the seat and the table. He was blabbing on about something or other, you could tell he had the information memorized because he spoke with his eyes drawing to the top right. It was a habit Tubbo noticed the other boy exhibited a lot. He had a lot of odd habits, like how he would brush his hair out six exact times in the morning, or how he rubbed his hands together every time before he entered a building, or how he clapped every time he said goodbye to somebody.

Tubbo noticed a lot of little things about the boy in the week or so they knew each other. He doesn't really know why. A deep part of him tells him that maybe he's scared that Ranboo will die on him too, and he wants to know everything he can about him while he still can.

"So basically, your dream job is to talk to depressed kids all day," Tubbo punctuated the statement by pointing his fork at the boy across from him, a bit of scrambled egg still hanging on. The eggs and toast was a polar opposite to the turkey on Ranboo's plate, he had insisted that it was dinner time, they should be eating dinner foods, to which Tubbo said that if they keep the breakfast items on the menu, he's gonna eat a breakfast meal.

"It's more than *that*, I'd be helping people. People like me that need help," he reasoned, shoveling down more turkey.

"You seem right as rain to me, boss man."

"Do you think people that get fucked up like this are fine," he drawled sarcastically, the chords of a joke playing blatantly in his tone. He gestured towards the array of jagged scars and burns that littered his mouth and jaw. It was a peculiar thing, he was so open to joking about it, yet still wore the mask religiously aside from eating, sleeping, and showering. Tubbo has yet to gather the courage to ask why.

“I dunno man, I just kinda assumed you got run over by like, a tractor or something,” Tubbo spoke through his mouthful of food.

“And you think someone can just walk away from getting run over by a tractor, and be perfectly fine with that?” Ranboo queried.

“I mean, sure, if you’re built different.”

“Noted,” Ranboo laughed.

“So, like, that’s really it then?” Tubbo asked, “You wanna be a therapist just to help people?”

. . .

“Okay, okay that sounded wrong, but you know what I mean.”

“Yea, yea I do. But no, I think it’s really interesting how the brain works. How this thing that’s sending signals to the rest of our body in order to survive, somehow triggers flaws in it’s emotional and physical response. Like, there’s a scientific reason for everything. There’s a scientific reason for why you don’t do your laundry,” Tubbo would give him one thing, he did sound very passionate.

“Out of all the cool things in science, you chose this. You could be blowing something up right now!” Tubbo’s eyes were blown wide with the excitement of that concept. When he was in year seven, their science class had them make elephant toothpaste. His lab partner- who just so happened to be Tommy- had accidentally spilled some of his beverage in the concoction, and the entire thing exploded all over the room. And the students. And the teacher. Not only did the two get sent home with a slap on the wrist, but Tommy got a stern talking to about hiding soda in his water bottle. Ever since then, they’d go out behind the convenience store, and their friend Jack who worked there would bring out a bunch of old products and they would mix or wire them around until something exploded.

The last time he saw Jack was at the memorial service. Jack tried to speak to him, but he had turned away.

“But,” Ranboo said pointedly, “There’s a scientific explanation for *why* something blows up.”

“Uggghhhh you’re so boring! I don’t want to think about why somethings gonna blow up, I just wanna keep hitting shit until it does.”

“How are you still alive?” Ranboo joked, yet the space in his backpack seemed to burn a little hotter.

“Luck, my friend. Pyromaniac’s luck,” Luck that none of those explosions hit him. Luck that he wakes up every morning. Luck that he wasn’t the one to catch pneumonia.

“So, Mr. Science Man,” Tubbo started again, “If there’s an explanation for everything, then explain the manor,” he took his thumb and pointed out the window, right at the old manor that sat eerily in the distance outside. The rest of the town ended not far past the diner, the manor was surrounded by miles of dark oak forests, but it felt as if it emanated an unsettling aura that still burned at his side even at this distance, even through the glass of the windows.

Ranboo frowned, looking down at the bucket list laying on the table, and then looking outside, “Well first and foremost, I think it’s just two children that heard one story about a haunted mansion and believed it, no questions asked.”

“Oi, it wasn’t just us that believed it. There’s like signs everywhere in town about the place.”

“Yea, cause they want to profit off of it, Tubbo. They quite literally want people like us to buy a t- shirt or something.”

“Well If I’m being honest with you Ranboo, I do kinda want a t- shirt.”

“There’s a psychological explanation for why you spend so much money all the time.”

“Oi, my money spending habits are my business, you weird psychic man. Leave my brain alone,” Tubbo leaned back in his seat and brushed his hands through his hair. It was getting long, soon it would start covering his eyes, “Back to the matter at hand. Explain ghosts to me.”

“Oh, I think it’s haunted.”

“WHAT?! But you said ghosts aren’t real!” Tubbo shouted, ignoring the judgemental glances that were casted their way.

“Ghosts aren’t real, but I think hauntings are,” Ranboo leaned forward.

“You are the dumbest person I’ve ever met.”

“Lemmie explain, Lemmie explain. So humans can expel emotions and auras right?”

“Right,” Tubbo agreed.

“So when you die, you expel these negative emotions into like, the air, or like, items or something. So a bunch of people got hurt and died in that mansion, so there’s just like, negative wavelengths. So when you go into the place, those wavelengths are there as a warning. It’s supposed to subconsciously be like, “Oh no, bad things happened here, I should leave!” So that already puts you on edge; your survival instinct has been triggered. So you’re on edge, your senses are heightened, and every time something minute just so happens to happen, you notice it. Picture frames fall off of bookshelves all the time even if nobody died in the place. It’s all just a matter of noticing it,” his explanation was long winded, and Tubbo would be lying if he said he paid attention to the entire thing.



“How much of that was you bullshitting me?”

“Mm, maybe a good amount. But if I believe it then that’s all that matters,” Ranboo concluded, and took the final bite of his meal, “How’d you even find out about this place anyway? It seems just kinda like a small town tourist trap.”

“Well to be fair, we made this list when we were ten. And if I remember correctly, like a couple of hours before making it, we watched this horror documentary about the place. Some ghost hunters or whatever went into the place and tried to do an exorcism or something. Of course, we were children and we thought it was the coolest thing we’ve ever seen, so we put it on the list. Jump cut to today, and I’m ready to get my ass haunted,” he took a long sip of his soda. Another point of contention between the two, ‘ *Tubbo, you already made a big deal about getting a breakfast meal, and now you’re gonna get a soda? That goes with like every meal except for breakfast.* ’

“I overheard you two boys plannin’ on sneaking into the manor?” Tubbo was startled out of his thoughts by a new voice speaking up. A waitress shuffled up to their table, already snatching away their empty plates. Ranboo quickly slipped his mask back on in the close presence of another person.

The woman was a good fifty years older than the two, her hair was grey and shiny, and her face was wrinkled with age. She was wearing a nice set of pearls, with matching antique hair clips. She surely did match the vibe of the diner. If Tubbo really assessed his surroundings, he would’ve noticed many black and white pictures on the wall that portrayed a bright young woman that shared the face of said waitress.

“I went there a whole bunch back in the day. Back when we didn’t have any of that new fangled tech you kids have,” the waitress spoke, both Ranboo and Tubbo looked up in interest, “That place is the real deal.”

“Really?” Ranboo spoke, “This is actually the first time I’ve heard of the place.”

“Oh yea. Besides the boring stuff like people seein’ things in the windows or creaking doors, people have died there,” she leaned further over the table, like she was telling a scary story over a campfire.

“Well yea, back in-” Tubbo started, reciting what he remembered from the documentary, but the waitress cut him off.

“No, not the original haunting. People these days. Hikers, squatters, teenagers looking for a place to drink. Hell, even ghost hunters have met their end messing with that place. S’ why there’s a no trespassing sign,” she didn’t bother to speak in a hushed tone, if the entire diner heard her tale then the entire diner heard her tale.

Ranboo leaned back and squinted, “So what? Like, animals, or a bad infrastructure?”

“Here’s the thing, kid. They sustained no injuries, there’s no explanation for their deaths. Their hearts just stopped. Some of the really old locals say that the manor is a vortex to hell, trying to collect as many souls as possible,” the waitress had tacky acrylic nails that were methodically tapping against the table. They were an ugly bright pink color.

You could see it in Ranboo’s eyes that he was frowning. His next question was directed towards Tubbo, “And you’re sure you wanna just, sacrifice a part of your friend’s remains to the ‘vortex of hell’?”

“If I’m being absolutely honest with you, Tommy would probably be so hyped about being sacrificed to poltergeists and demons,” Tubbo spoke genuinely. His hand found it’s way over to his backpack, which was sitting next to him. He picked it up absentmindedly and laid it on his lap, hugging it.

“I’d be careful if I were you two,” The waitress warned, “Keep an eye on each other.”

Ranboo clapped his hands together lightly, “Well, thank you miss. Could we get a check please?” It was clear he was starting to grow uncomfortable by the woman’s presence.

“Of course, sweetheart,” he nodded and with that, she was ducking back into the kitchen with their plates and silverware.

“She was odd,” Ranboo commented, still looking her way. When he was satisfied with his spying, he slipped his mask off and started sipping on his water.

“I think she was cool.” He responded pointedly. Ranboo went to retort something else but accidentally sucked up some water.

With the water going down the wrong pipes, the taller boy burst out into a sudden fit of coughs trying to expel the water.

They were coughs. They were normal, healthy coughs, no rasp, no vulgar. But-

*“Techno! He’s not breathing anymore! Tommy- Tommy you gotta breathe-”*

But Tubbo’s heart still seized up in panic. The strings in his chest squeezed and twisted together and burned through every nerve in his body, crackling like lightning. He-

*The colors, everything outside of the vehicle had blended into one amorphous flash of colors. There was nothing around them- only colors.*

Before he knew it, he was standing up, leaning over the table, one hand reaching out for his friend. He didn’t even notice that the coughs had died down into a clearing of the throat. He could still hear coughing, he could still hear coughing-

*A gasp. A wheeze. Painful and crackling, but a miracle nonetheless. Tommy was breathing, albeit painstakingly. Every breath the blonde took it felt as if Tubbo was taking one too.*

“Are you okay?!” He asked, exhibiting more worry than necessary for the situation.

“I’m fine,” Ranboo assured, patting his chest.

*“He’ll be fine now, Tubbo. The doctors got him,” Techno assured, a hand on the shoulder as they stood dumbstruck at the entrance of the ER.*

“You’re sure?” Tubbo made no move to sit down or move in the slightest.

“I’m sure, Tubbo. I’m fine. I just drank the water wrong is all.” Ranboo brushed it off.

There was a long moment of pause, “. . .you’re sure?”

“Yes, Tubbo. I’m fine.”

Tubbo faltered. And slowly, but surely, he eased back down to his seat.

. . .

“You’re okay?” he sounded like a desperate broken record at this point. Ranboo’s eyes were filled with confusion for a moment, before they softened with understanding.

“I’m okay,” He smiled.

“. . .okay.”

The two sat in an uncomfortable silence.

“I’m gonna go to the bathroom, and then we’ll head out, okay?” Ranboo proposed. Tubbo didn’t speak, only nodded. And with that, Ranboo was gone, and Tubbo was alone. He looked back out the window. The manor truly was a sight to behold, the paint was a dark

color that blended with the forest, yet it was such a contrast to the bright and popping paint job of the town houses. If he remembered correctly from the documentary, the house used to be a blue color, *but the anguish of the lost souls drained the color*. That's right. The documentary said something stupid about how ghosts absorb the color blue from things because it brings them a sense of fullness.

And. . .okay, Tubbo's beliefs can only go so far. The color was clearly gone from the house because of the rainy weather this area is subjected to.

It took maybe ten seconds for the sentiment to file through his brain before he found himself rushing to the bathrooms as well, bumping his hip against some of the cramped tables. When he got to the small hall in which the bathrooms were found, Ranboo had his hand on the handle to the door labeled 'Missus' in heavy cursive.

"That's the ladies' toilets, mate," Tubbo noted. Ranboo jumped a little, eyes a little wide, and stuttered.

"The- um, mens' room was occupied."

With a simple kick, the door labeled 'Gentlemen's' in an equally articulate cursive, flew open to an empty room. Ranboo gawked.

"I um, couldn't get it open," he slowly walked over to the now open door.

"All it takes is a good kick, my friend," Tubbo smiled, showing off his teeth. And with that, he swung around and strolled to the woman's bathroom. Ranboo made a noise of confusion, "The women's rooms are cleaner." Tubbo said as a matter of factly. He could just see Ranboo make an expression of exasperation before he shut the door behind him.

The room was just as small and cramped as the diner. Like, he could lean his entire body against one of the walls, stretch his arm out, and touch the other wall with ease. Everything was a dirty shade of pink; as if you took the color and dragged it through the mud a couple of times. The old picture frames that lined the walls were depictions of flowery landscapes and doilies, and you could see a metal sheen through the cracked mirror.

When Tubbo looked in the mirror, he saw a figure he didn't recognize. Sure, that *thing* had his face, and his hair, and his hands, but looking into its eyes, those weren't his eyes. No, they weren't his. They were lifeless, and cracked, and they didn't match with the constant words of jest that left his mouth.

Sure his body was the same, but he was different nonetheless. When did he become like this? Downtrodden and disheveled. When did his hair grow past his ears? When did it become so hard to upturn his mouth into a smile? When did his eyes become so *sad*?

He slowly lifted his hand up and traced the features along his cheeks, but he didn't *feel* it. The face he was touching wasn't his, the hands he was controlling weren't his either. The real Tubbo was left back over a month ago, still tripping and stumbling to catch up with the world. Now all that's left is this *guy*, who's eyes were burning.

*Cry, cry, cry, cry, please just cry*

But he couldn't cry. There was something wrong with this imposter wearing his identity, and he couldn't cry even when he tried. He was heartless. Surely, he was heartless. His friend was dead and he couldn't even shed a single tear.

"Please," he whispered to himself, voice cracking, "please just cry."

His eyes were wide, and shining in the reflection of the old yellow lights.

His best friend was dead. Tommy was never coming back. Tommy would never live past the age of sixteen. And clearly Tubbo didn't care. If he didn't cry, he didn't *care*. Why couldn't he just let himself hurt?

"Please just cry."

The Burchard Manor was a grandiose and extravagant mansion built in the 1800s for James Burchard and his large family of oil barons. The structure was erected to house the family, along with their servants and staff, as well as to throw yearly balls and galas for the other snobby rich folk across the country. If you were to ask the history books about them, they would say that the family was jovial and charismatic, paving the way for a long line of successful business men and beautiful wives. If you were to ask the local townsfolk, they would say that the family was a scourge to this earth in their own right. They chopped down a considerable amount of the local forests just to build their home which blocks the sun from the rest of the town. And that's not even bringing up their gatherings and how loud they are. It was safe to say that with every ounce of morale that went up for the Burchard family, the same amount went down for the town.

By the late 1800s, someone had finally grown tired of it. Though their identity was never revealed, a masked man entered the house late one night, early into the month of October. The family of eight at the time had just settled down for the night, the children all lovingly tucked into their beds, the wife having just laid down herself, the husband not far behind. And one by one, youngest to oldest, the Burchard family and every tie to them were butchered, slain, slaughtered. The masked man must not have fulfilled his bloodlust by just the family, because the next day, when their guests arrived for their annual banquet, one hundred- something people entered, and only one left. One man with dark clothes, and a bloodstained mask.

By the early 1900s, the "Burchard Massacre" was widely known across the country. Most saw it as a horror and a tragedy, some saw it as a miracle, karma. Some were angry, some were overjoyed, but what was most dangerous was when those were curious. They say that entering the manor is a death sentence in and of itself. But those who are curious never listen. And the manor lay claim to dozens of new victims every passing decade.

By 2014, a documentary about the manor had long since been released, and two young boys found themselves sitting inches away from the television in awe. Wilbur had taken one look at the show and laughed at the two youngins, going on a tangent about how ghosts weren't real. Technoblade, despite his monotone demeanor, leaned into the ghost story just to scare them more.

And by 2020, Tubbo, Ranboo, and Tommy's remains, stood at the looming entrance of the Burchard Manor. The height of the door even rivaled Ranboo, whose neck was craned upward just to gaze at it all. Everything was boarded up, but Tubbo could just make out a large enough crawley hole just near their feet.

Ranboo blinked and then turned his attention towards the large flashlight in his hands. It was one of those cheap ones that is powered by shaking it, but every time you shake it, it makes that annoying rattling sound. On top of that, it barely produced any worthwhile light, but the sun was already setting and there was no way in hell they were going to go into an uber haunted mansion at night without any light.

“Alright, so we just need to find the master study,” it was a big and foreboding room made of the darkest colored wood he had ever seen, three of the four walls were entirely lined with grandiose bookshelves, thousands upon thousands of books- fine literature, mythology, and thesauruses as far as the eye can see. It was the most haunted room in the house, despite only one person having died in it, the husband. Tubbo speculated it was because there were a lot of formidable books that an angry ghost could throw around.

Tommy had gone on a half an hour long rant about how it was *clearly* the coolest room in the house, because the chair was big, and all of the important business was done in there. So Tubbo figured it was a pretty sound place to rest some of the ashes. The problem with that was that the study was somewhere in the back of the house on the third floor. And they were at the entrance. On the ground floor. At the front.

“Sounds like a plan,” Ranboo continued to fumble with the flash light, “How do we get in?”

Wordlessly, Tubbo dropped to the ground and started crawling through the small hole in the wall. When he popped back up on the other side, he was covered in dust and cobwebs, but at least he didn’t have tetanus. . .yet.

“Like this, big man!” he shouted from the other side.

“There’s still a hole, like, right here! You don’t need to shout!” Ranboo shouted back. And then, after a moment of waiting, his friend crawled through the opening as well, trying to finagle his gangly body through.

He didn’t really know what he anticipated for the manor to smell like, maybe decay or blood, or at the very least wood. But really, it just smelled like dust, and maybe the faint scent of spray paint.



The two stood in awe for a moment at the grand foyer. It was a large room with two grand staircases on each side, stopping for a moment to the second floor, and then continuing to spiral to the third. All three floors were on view, with intricately designed railings. At the very top, a gigantic chandelier made of thousands upon thousands of glass crystals. Even without any electricity, the dwindling rays of the setting sun seeping through the window still made the structure glisten and glimmer in a way Tubbo had never seen before.

“So, you feeling haunted, big man?” He turned to Ranboo.

“Not particularly. But I’m pretty sure the graffiti dick three feet to my right isn’t helping,” he frowned as he scanned over the large wall to the right that didn’t have a single inch of original wallpaper left under the mass amounts of graffiti pieces and tags. Tubbo found himself laughing at the crudeness of it, “So, are we heading straight to the study, or are we exploring first?”

Tubbo hummed, as much as he wanted to explore everything this place had to offer, he was here on a mission, “Nah, I feel like it’s far away enough, we’ll see more than enough of the house on our way there.”

“I,” Ranboo drew out the syllable for a moment, “Have no clue what the layout of this house is.”

“They kinda ran around a lot in the documentary, but I got a general gist of things,” He looked around for a second, “Or, worst comes to worst, we wander around the third floor until we find what we’re looking for.”

The second Ranboo took off his mask, he sneezed.

“I mean, if some guy could sneak in here in the middle of the night and murder, what, eight people, then I’m sure we can find what we’re looking for.”

“Tubbo, that guy probably planned that murder for like, months beforehand.”

“I wouldn’t ‘ave.”

Ranboo laughed in surprise, “What?”

“I would’ve just done it, no remorse. Spontaneous, innit?”

“I suddenly feel a lot more uncomfortable spending my every waking moment with you.”

The two started their ascent up the stairs. With each lunge upward, the wood planks below them groaned with exertion.

“Yea, I’m still doubting that lady’s story. People probably died in here because of the horrible infrastructure,” Ranboo commented with a frown, keeping a keen eye on every step he took. For a moment, he attempted to hold onto the railing, but that just ended with him groaning and shaking the heavy layer of dust off of his hands.

“We better not bite it to a set of stairs. One out of three of us are already dead and I don’t feel like increasing that number,” Tubbo joked, but it felt bitter on his tongue.

“If anyone here is gonna die, it’s gonna be you, Mr. I explode things for fun- AH!” And with that, as to accentuate his statement, Ranboo tripped and fell backwards down the stairs, tumbling and flipping around as he went. He landed in a heap of limbs defeatedly on the dirty ground at the bottom of the staircase with a groan.

“You okay, mate?” Tubbo called from where he stood, turned around at the top of the stairs.

“Yea. Yea I’m fine,” Ranboo responded, “Why’d you trip me?”

“What do you mean? I didn’t trip you,” Tubbo frowned.

“Dude, you literally yanked my hood and tripped me down the stairs.”

“No. . .no I didn’t.”

“Sure. Whatever you say Tubbo.”

Tubbo furrowed his brows in concern as his friend hobbled back up the stairs, “Maybe it was a ghost. Maybe you got ghosted.”

“Tubbo. Blaming a prank on a ghost is like breaking a vase and then blaming your sibling,” Ranboo frowned.

“Okay non-believer. But when you get ghosted to death, don’t come ghost- crying to me that you’re ghost- dead,” Tubbo snickered and they made their way to the second set of stairs.

“You sure you can make it up, boss man? Need me to hold your hand?” Tubbo joked, looking at the very top.

“Oh shut up,” Ranboo sulked, but took his hand anyway. Their footsteps echoed throughout the house as they made it to the top, and passed room after room.

As opposed to the first floor, and even the second to a point, which were dedicated to show and exuberance, the third floor was more of a homey space. The floor was mostly bedrooms, tea rooms, libraries, studies, you name it. There has to be a point where a mansion is so big that you run out of ideas for rooms, Tubbo’s sure that half of these went unused during their prime.

Eventually, the sun had fully set, and the halls were delved into a deep darkness. Ranboo’s light was poor at illuminating virtually anything, and you had to squint to see even things in the direct line of sight of the beam of light. Though it wasn’t a major setback in them

reaching their destination, it did prevent them from peeking in or exploring any of the offset rooms.

“You feeling haunted yet?”

“You’ve asked that before, and no. I’m not feeling ‘haunted’.”

“Even though a ghost yanked you down the stairs?”

“That wasn’t a ghost, Tubbo. You’re trying to scare me.”

“And you’re trying to frame me as a trickster and a schemer!”

“A *trickster* and *schemer*? ” he asked incredulously.

“Two things that I am not. And quite frankly, I’m offended that you think that way,” Tubbo scoffed.

“Seriously, we’ve been in here for what, an hour? And nothing. No gusts of wind, no noises,” Ranboo sounded disappointed.

“To be totally honest, I don’t even feel that scared,” Tubbo mourned. Nothing. Not even the anxiety of something ghostly happening. Tubbo couldn’t help but feel disappointed. Not in the ‘I’m a young child and I got my hopes up and now this is not meeting my expectations’ type of way, but something indescribable, an almost cold type of devastation boiled in his gut.

“Well, here it is,” Ranboo stopped at the entrance to the master study. The door was ajar slightly and Tubbo wasted no time bushing it open with a creak.

And there was the room in all its glory.

And-

And it was a little disappointing if Tubbo was being completely honest.

Sure it met its description. But that's kind of it.

He doesn't know what he was expecting. Maybe something *more*. He- he came all this way. .  
. for a room.

Tommy would be berating him right now.

Ranboo started walking around, inspecting the room, but Tubbo just kinda stood there.

Thinking about how edited that documentary was.

God he's so stupid.

Ten year old him was so stupid.

"You alright, Tubbo?" Ranboo asked from where he was skimming through a dusty book.

"I don't think we should spread the ashes in this room," he croaked.

"What?"

“This doesn’t feel like *the* room. This doesn’t feel right.”

“Alright,” *concern*, “We can look for another room.”

Tubbo just hummed, and found himself walking over to the glass like door that led to a small balcony. Walking outside, his entire body was encased in the cold October air. Crickets bellowed in an orchestra of somehow quiet sound that blended in with the gentle rustling of the leaves. Ranboo stood next to him, providing a swelling head to his right. He looked to his friend and something akin to appreciation filled his emotions. Ranboo was here. He was here, in this stupid mansion with him. With him no matter what. Through thick and thin, Ranboo was here. And maybe he knew this guy for a week or so, but he loves him for that. He cares about him in a way that makes him scared. He cares about him so much that surely Ranboo’s lungs will fill with infection and he’ll choke away just like everyone else Tubbo loves. Or he’ll do drugs. He’ll die, or he’ll do drugs. Because that’s what Tubbo does to people. It’s happened to everyone else in his life, so surely he has to be the common denominator.

“I’m sorry,” he didn’t realise he spoke. Ranboo looked at him.

“What?”

“I’m sorry that you know me.” Tubbo was no better than the pneumonia.

“Well I’m not,” Ranboo replied wistfully, “I’m not sorry I know you. You’ve guided me farther than any star in the sky could.”

Tubbo didn’t respond to that, and thus Ranboo made no move to speak further. The stars sure were pretty tonight.

Tubbo sprung into action.

“Gimme a knee.”

“What?” Ranboo turned, surprised.

“Gimme a knee, to the roof.”

Ranboo did, hoisting the smaller onto the ledge of the roof. Tubbo turned around and held out a hand, yanking Ranboo onto the roof as well. They paid no mind to the steep incline, or the long fall, or the lack of light. Instead, they laid down, side by side, and gazed up to the millions and millions of stars that danced in the night sky.

And despite everything, the stars were still here. Even when Tubbo was born on a cold winter's night, even when Tubbo looked at it every night in his little bedroom before going to sleep, even when he went outside for a breath of fresh air after spending ten straight hours in a hospital, even across an ocean, thousands of miles away, even then, the stars were still there. The same stars, no matter how different Tubbo became. Even if it felt as if his entire world was changing, those stars were there to prove that something, *something* was still there.

And finally, Tubbo broke the silence.

“Do you think, like, because this place is super haunted, Tommy’s ghost is here?” he asked, as the stars speckled his wide eyes.

Ranboo just hummed, long and accepting, yet quizzical.

Here, on this roof, looking at the vast expanse of stars that bleed into infinity, Tubbo felt as if he had all the time in the world; this moment would be forever even long past when it would end. And so he took his time with speaking.

“I know that the only reason we’re here is because this location is on the list, but I feel like. . . I feel like I kinda came here to prove something to myself,” encouraging silence, “Not that, like, we would survive this or just get ghost murdered or anything, but. . .” he took a deep breath, “I just *really* want to believe that ghosts are real.”

In that moment, Tubbo felt a reassuring hand interlock with his, and squeezed it lightly. Despite his rough look and scars littering his body, Ranboo's hands were soft.

"I just really want to believe Tommy's still with me," his voice cracked a little, but he didn't cry, "Or maybe I don't want to believe that Tommy's life just *ended*. That- that one second he was there, and then the next, everything was gone. Nothing. Tommy doesn't deserve nothing. He deserves to float around and watch us fuck around with this bucket list like a movie, he deserves to haunt things, and scare people by like, slamming a door or something. God, he would love scaring people in petty ways. He deserves to travel the world, and see everything it has to offer, and to never hurt ever again. He doesn't deserve for it to just end."

Tubbo could swear that, in that moment, or maybe at this location, the stars looked a little bit brighter. Another pause.

"Or maybe I just don't want our last interaction to be our last. We didn't like, fight or anything. It was fine, we were fine. But. . ."

He breathed out. And said the next part so, so much quieter.

"When he was put on end-of-life care, I was told I could be in the room with him. To like, say goodbye and be with him while he passes," Ranboo squeezed his hand tighter, "But I- But I- The last time I had saw him, he was so- so *sick* , and there were so many *wires* , sticking out of his nose and mouth and fingers, and- *they said he had only gotten worse* , and I couldn't see him like that. Tommy's- Tommy's big and strong, and energetic, he's not supposed to be that weak, he's not supposed to be that frail. I *couldn't* see him like that. I couldn't watch him die. "

. . .

"Or maybe I was a dumb fuck that didn't think he would actually die. I mean, like, four days prior, we were running around the back yard, throwing water balloons at squirrels. It all happened so fast, and I just couldn't wrap my head around the fact that he was going to die. And so I wasn't there."



“But what if- what if he needed me? What if he was hurting, and scared, and he needed me there. And he couldn’t understand *why* I wasn’t there. And he- he needed me there so bad and I wasn’t.”

He shuddered.

“So I just really want him to be a ghost, because I want him to be here to know that I’m *sorry*. ”

And he breathed.

“But ghosts aren’t real. And he’s irreversibly, inconsolably gone.”

And he breathed because Tommy couldn’t.

“And it’s so unfair.”

And he breathed because the world made him keep breathing.

“Why are you doing all of this?” Ranboo asked, his voice soft and personal.

“What?”

“Why are you going to all of these places? Why do you keep going?”

“Well- because Tommy always wanted to go to all of these places. Tommy wanted to live.”

“Then there he is.”

Tubbo looked at him as he continued.

“That thing keeping you going, making you go place to place, that’s Tommy. He may not be alive anymore, and he may not be a ghost, but he’s that drive. He’s that drive inside of you.”

“And there’s no scientific explanation behind that. It just is.”

It just is.

No explanation. No reasoning. No rhyme.

Just two boys, laying on the roof of a haunted manor until the moon could no longer be seen behind the trees. Just laying, and looking, and breathing until the wind picked up just a little bit.

And by the time the first new rays of sun were peaking over the horizon, another small portion of Tommy’s ashes took to flying in the wind, and laying claim on the second check mark off the list.

## Chapter End Notes

You can tell this is set in a fictional universe because it is the year 2020 and the world is not ravaged by covid.

# A Volcano, Any Volcano

## Chapter Summary

Content warning: hospitals and everything that entails (intensive care unit)(just skip to the border line)

## Chapter Notes

I always get worried that I'm going to do something wrong when writing language barrier scenes, but then I remember that I have been bilingual for ten years, and I give myself a break.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Hospitals have this funny smell that makes Tubbo really dizzy. He doesn't quite know what aspect afflicts such a reaction out of him, maybe it's the forefront of nothing mixed with the bombardment of sanitized medical supplies and medicine. But something bites his sinuses and fizzes up to his brain, making his mind feel fuzzy, and his quick movements feel clumsy.

Though maybe the smell of medicine is preferable over the stench of sick and death that would be expected from the ICU. Despite all of the uncesorced horror that is being contained within these walls, it still managed to smell clean. And that would surprise Tubbo if he hadn't already taken notice of so many other things about the ICU that exceed his expectations. Like how it was late at night- the sun just having set- and the halls were still buzzing with chaos, nurses and doctors darting from place to place, beeping monitors and alarms left and right.

Another thing was just how big the place was. They had originally taken Tommy to their town's local emergency room, a not so big building for a not so big town. There were maybe eighty rooms max, and Tubbo had basically memorized every hall and room. But this place- a large ICU section off of a hospital three hours away from home- was like a maze that he could get lost in over and over.

Which is pretty much his situation now.

He had just finished taking a shower at one of the family waiting units. His hair was still damp and curly, and smelled like the antibacterial shampoo they made him use to rid his body of the possible viral germs that his friend was coughing out. Him and Techno could only spend so much time at the new hospital before some nurses rushed them away to decontaminate themselves. His clothes were a no go as well, so now he was sporting a souvenir t-shirt of the town they were in, and a pair of way-to-large flannel pajama pants. Admittedly, he looked foolish, but the rushing doctors paid him no mind.

He had yet to visit Tommy since dropping him off. He had tried earlier, but the room was occupied.

*It was just Tommy and Phil in the room. Tommy limp in the stretcher bed and Phil leaned over, running his hands through his son's curly hair comfortingly, and placing kisses on his forehead. It was an intimate and private moment between the two that Tubbo shouldn't have been watching, but he could help but peek through the door.*

*Tommy's eyes were red and puffy, and a little bit unfocussed as tears streamed down his cheeks. His body shuddered with small soundless sobs as Phil whispered reassurances that Tubbo couldn't hear.*

*"Oh my baby," he crooned, leaning back a little, "Can you show me where it hurts, bud?"*

*Tommy sniffled as the information sunk into his brain. The tube down his throat rubbed against his vocal chords, preventing him from talking, so he slowly but surely lifted up his hand. His arm was shaky in its trajectory, and Phil's hands found themselves hovering over the younger's, helping it along the way. Tommy's hand landed on his chest, just where his left lung was. Phil wrapped his hands around Tommy's.*

*"Oh bud. The doctors are gonna make you feel all better, okay? We just gotta be patient," he whispered. And before he could hear any more, Tubbo left.*

Deciding to give the two their space for a little while longer, Tubbo had meandered around until he peered out a large window, and saw Wilbur outside, leaning against the railing at the top of the hospital parking garage. The second he opened the door leading outside, he was hit with a wave of warm, humid air that left his freshly washed skin feeling dirty and sticky already.

As he advanced on his destination, the biting stench of smoke became more and more prominent. And as he settled next to the rickety form of Wilbur, the older made no move to put out the cigarette that was lazily bit between his teeth. Every time he breathed in, it was as if he could see the painful euphoria that momentarily flashed through his eyes, and every time he breathed out, it looked as if he was a dragon breathing ash and fire. Maybe he was.

Wilbur Soot. The dragon that breathed ash into the sunset that burned as bright as a fire. It truly was as if the sun was a raging fire in the colorful sky, whose rays burned and sizzled over the foreboding clouds. Tubbo had never seen such an extraordinary sunset before, not even on the bench. It felt almost traitorous to be viewing it without Tommy by his side.

This. . . Wilbur was relapsing, wasn't he? The man hadn't smoked a pack in two years. Where did he even get the cigarettes?

He was clean, and he was happy, and he was healthy. And yet here he was, smoking again, and Tubbo was the only one there to witness it.

And yet, in the grand scheme of things, this didn't feel as big as it should have.

"Do you think it's a dick move to be actively ruining my lungs while my brother is breathing through a machine right now?" Wilbur spoke wistfully, his deep voice holding a rasp as wisps of smoke fluttered through his teeth.

Tubbo hummed for a moment, deep and contemplative.

"I think if Tommy were here, and cognisant, he'd totally be chastising you right now," Tubbo refuted, tracing the tips of his fingers along the rough and rocky edge of the cement railing guard.

“Would *you* chastise me?”

*Yes*, he wanted to say. He wanted to scream and yell, that every time he saw the bright, snarky, and creative Wilbur Soot smoking a cigarette, it reminded him of his father. His father stomping out a cigarette as the police shoved him against the roof of their car, cuffing him. Smiling at him through the windshield as blue and red flashed brightly behind him.

*Yes*, he wanted to say as he thought about how happy Wilbur looked when he went a year without smoking a cigarette. The proud and loving smile his father had given him.

*Yes*, he wanted to say, as the smoke snuck into his airways and burned his lungs.

“I’m not Tommy,” he said instead. And maybe some part of that was true.

“No, you’re not,” Wilbur revelled.

Wilbur waited a while before speaking again.

“When this shit show ends and we all get home, I’m gonna quit. No exceptions, no relapses. I’m done,” he stated to the air. And even though Tubbo was the only one there to listen, it was as if it was for the entire world to hear.

“Really?”

“Cold turkey,” Wilbur affirmed, “I don’t know if I could deal with being intubated. Would probably have a panic attack.”

“It’s. . .horrific,” Tubbo agreed. He hadn’t seen much of Tommy yet, but he had heard him cry. For the first time in his life, he heard Tommy cry.

“Good lord, there was a tube down his trachea,” Wilbur shuddered, and took another drag off of his cigarette, “I know that, like, the doctors are gonna tell us that everything is gonna be fine no matter what, but I think Tommy will make it through this.”

“Yea?”

“Yea. It looks grim right now, but he’s the strongest kid I know. We’re all gonna go home in like a week, and Dad’ll buy us all ice cream. The one with extra cookie dough and sprinkles that Tommy really likes. And this’ll all be just water under the bridge.” Wilbur’s eyes looked so analytical as they traced along the city skyline in front of them.

“I haven’t even thought about the prospect of Tommy dying. Like, this all just feels like a weird hurdle that will pass,” Tubbo took a moment to sort out his thoughts. Has he really even had a single congestive thought since the incident that morning? “This doesn’t feel like the end in any regards. Does that make sense?”

“Yea. I get you.”

It was only then, did he notice that the hot air had started to delve into a chill. That the almost spotlight like illumination that the sun set emitted was now a dark blue surrounding atmosphere. He sniffed his nose at the change.

“I’m gonna head back inside,” he said, and slowly turned around.

“You go ahead,” Wilbur didn’t move his gaze from where he was looking, “I’ll let you two have some time alone.”

And with that, Tubbo was thrown back into the world of cold, crowded halls and sterile, nauseating smells. Tommy’s room wasn’t too far from where he was, maybe a three minute walk if he was as swift as the bustling nurses.

Speaking, left and right. Beeping, up and down. Passing one offshoot hallway, he managed to latch on to a certain conversation. It was Tommy's head doctor, standing tall but nervous in demeanor. Standing in front of her was Phil, empathetic and frustrated tears streaming down his face, and Technoblade, whose face was more stern, but still so, so tired. His long hair was still soaking wet, and would certainly knot in the messy bun it was being held up in.

"-seeing signs of sepsis. He'll make it through tonight, but anything past tomorrow is-" he caught the doctor speaking. But he made no move to stop and listen, he didn't like the way the doctor would look at them like she knew something they didn't.

Entering Tommy's room with the gentle shutting of a door, the world was enveloped back into silence. A silence that almost amplified all of the machinery that was keeping his friend alive. And,

oh

The machines.

If the Tommy from their childhood would see him now, he would call him a robot. He looked so small, laying there all swallowed up in the layers of scratchy warmed blankets that the nurses coddled him with. At some point he was changed out of his clothes, shirt now replaced with a large johnny gown. With his lungs and torso needing to be at quick access at all times, the gown remained untied and it acted more like a blanket with arms over anything else. Dozens of wires snaked out from under the gown, leading to all of the beeping machines. Along with that, his arms were occupied with a sphygmomanometer around his upper arm, something clamped around his pointer finger, and an IV on the back of his palm. And the worst of all was the ventilator tube down his throat, his face. Everything just looked so painful.

He was deadly still, his face delicately tilted to the side. Tubbo would've thought he was asleep if it weren't for his blearily opened eyes that stared into nothingness. His beloved stuffed cow Henry was snuggled underneath one of his arms, his hand lightly tracing over the plush surface.

His mother gave him that cow. And for the last sixteen years, it has been his most cherished possession.



“Hey boss man,” he greeted softly, slowly making his way over to the bed. It took a few moments for Tommy’s eyes to slowly make their way over to where he sat down next to the bed. Tubbo could basically see the fever radiating off of him.

Tommy tried shifting uncomfortably, to which Tubbo soothed by taking his frail hand in his. He smoothed his thumb over his friend's bony knuckles, making sure to not jostle the IV.

“One for ‘yes’, two for ‘no’, okay?” he fit his hand underneath Tommy’s fingertips.

When they were both twelve, they were upset that the twins seemed to communicate with ‘a language of their own’. Jealous and ever so competitive, they spent the entire day learning morse code. They were so excited that they had their own code language.

For about a week until Technoblade told them that he did, in fact, know morse code as well.

Though the sentiment still stands.

Tubbo just has to hope they both remember enough four years later. He would try to ask as many yes or no questions as possible, just to make it easier on his friend.

“You doing okay?” he started.

Tommy just rubbed light circles on the back of Tubbo’s hand.

“It’s okay to say no.”

There was a moment of hesitation.

‘No’

“Is there anything I can do to make you feel better?”

Tubbo tried to decipher the reply, but Tommy just tapped something nonsensical. It took him a while to realise that he was mimicking the sound of his heart rate monitor.

What did the doctor say? Something about delirium?

“Do you want me to put on a movie?”

‘No’

Tubbo sighed, “You tired?”

‘Yes’

“Alright, I can let you get some rest if you would like.”

Before he could stand up to leave, he felt more tapping.

‘Stay tonight?’

“Of course, Big Man,” he was unsure about visitation rules in the ICU, but if Tommy wanted him to stay then fuck those stuck up nurses.

Tommy could barely even lift his arms, so getting him to shift over a little would be out of the question. But Tubbo made do, sliding his shoes underneath the bed and slipping underneath the mass pile of thin blankets. It took a lot of fumbling, making sure not to jostle his friend or any of the wires, but by the end of it, he was pressed in between the bars of the bed and his friend. He gently rested his head on Tommy's chest, and wrapped his arms around his torso, snuggling in close. Tommy's hand found its way back on top of Tubbo's.

"Is this good? I'm not hurting you, am I?" he asked.

'The pressure is nice'

Tubbo hummed, and settled down. Hospitals were never inviting for comfort, everything was too clean, and there were so many pointy needles. The monotonous beeping blended into white noise, and though the fluorescent lights had dimmed into one warm one in the corner, it was still much too bright.

Maybe if he closed his eyes, he could imagine that they were on a camping trip. This hospital was just a camping grounds, and this room their tent. Him and Tommy had just retired to their sleeping back after a long day of hiking, yet they couldn't go to bed just yet. Phil and Will had just run out to the store to get supplies for s'mores, Techno was out chopping wood for a fire. And things were good. They were just two kids that held no worry.

Maybe, if he concentrated hard enough, the beeping of the machines would sound like the song of crickets.

Just as he had thought Tommy had fallen asleep, he felt one final set of tapping on the back of his hand.

'I love you'

And though they were words of fondness, something about them struck fear in Tubbo's heart. Something about them felt too final. And yet-

“Love you too,” he whispered, and closed his eyes.

With his left ear pressed against his friend’s chest, he could hear his horrible, crackling breathing perfectly. Like a waterlogged machine that was spluttering to still operate. He stayed awake until the breathes, that were already too far and in between, slowed down into a resting pace.

And with the crackling fire of Tommy’s lungs, Tubbo fell asleep.

---

Tubbo woke up when the vehicle they were riding in hit a particularly heavy bump in the road. Blinking his eyes open from where his head was leaned against Ranboo’s shoulder, it took him a few moments to remember where he was.

The flood of angry bickering in Spanish quickly reminded him.

Reminded him of him and Ranboo walking down the side of the road on a particularly cold day.

Reminded him of complaining about his legs hurting.

Reminded him of Ranboo holding his thumb out to the road in a joking manner.

And the car that stopped for them, immediately shutting them up.

And the fact that it took them squeezing themselves into the back, third row seats of the car, and settling themselves down before they realized that the family they were hitchhiking with, in fact, did not speak English.

Nobody really seemed to mind though, the family of five stayed to themselves up in the front, and Tubbo and Ranboo to their own in the back; fighting for room in the seats with the family's luggage and food coolers.

Tubbo hadn't realized that he had fallen asleep, nor did he know for how long. Looking out the windows, heavy rain pelted against them with no signs of stopping. It was with that, that he was thankful they had hauled up in these stranger's car.

Did the family even know where they were taking them? Whatever. If Tubbo was prone to making smart decisions, he would be back home in Britain right now. At least they were moving forward.

Ranboo was occupying himself, typing away on his phone. Ranboo's expression was dour, his eyes squinted in frustration as he sent a text message. Now, eavesdropping was wrong, but Tubbo was nothing if not morbidly curious. Looking at the screen-

Oh. Wow.

He couldn't get in any of the words, maybe it was the dyslexia, maybe it was the lack of time, but each person- both Ranboo and the recipient- were sending long winded paragraphs of messages. And as quickly as Ranboo's last message was sent, his finger flew across the screen, and the contact was blocked, stealing away the message conversation with it. The taller sighed and leaned back.

"Parents," he informed when Tubbo looked at him inquisitively. He hummed in understanding as his attention drifted back to the other's phone. Hiding behind a cluster of apps, his phone wallpaper looked to be an old family photo. An old man sat, lounged in a ratty fold out chair under an awning in someone's backyard. If Tubbo was being articulate, he would say that the man kind of looked like Santa Claus if Santa Claus rolled through a pile of dust. He had a can of beer in one of his hands, and a lackadaisical smile on his face directed towards a little girl that was standing in front of him. She was young, no taller than up to his waist. A bright smile took up her face as she beamed, one hand grabbing onto the old man's knee as it looked like she was balancing up on her legs to stand. It was a pleasantly domestic scene, and it made Tubbo smile slightly.

“Is that your sister?” He asked quietly. He could feel Ranboo stiffen next to him, but nothing else indicated his discomfort at the topic.

His phone was shut off in the blink of an eye, and the picture was swallowed by the darkness.

“Sure,” he responded plainly.

“Is she back with your family?” he inquired. Tubbo could understand if that’s what was making him uncomfortable, especially if his family situation was shitty.

“Yes,” Ranboo breathed, “Yea, but she’s safe there. Don’t worry.”

Tubbo adjusted his position a little bit, “She’s safe and you aren’t?”

It took a moment before Ranboo responded.

“They- My parents, they like her a lot more than they like me,” the car hit another bump in the road, “They wish I was more like her, and less like. . .me. But I’m not, and they hate me for that.”

Tubbo frowned, “Do you hate her for that?”

The question was quite frankly inappropriate to ask, but it was said in such a soft tone, that Ranboo couldn’t help but respond.

“I don’t know,” he admitted, “A part of me really wants to. She’s- she ruined my life in a lot of ways. But she was just a kid, and she got me this far. And, I mean, she’s still my phone background.”

“Who was the other man?”

“My grandpa. I love him a lot,” his voice was genuine and remeicent.

“Yea?”

“One time, when I was like eleven, we were at a family reunion barbeque or whatever, and he punched my dad right in the jaw.”

Tubbo couldn't help but laugh, “What!?”

“If I remember correctly, he was being an ass and kept insulting the casserole that was being served. But the head of the family- my great grandma made that casserole, and it's like this really important recipe. So here he is, bad mouthing this recipe, and everyone's, like, super uncomfortable. So what does my grandpa do? Hands me his root beer and socks him clean across the jaw.”

“Oh my god. Take me next time. Don't underestimate my height, I can throw a good punch,” Tubbo exclaimed.

“Sure you can,” Ranboo supplied.

“It's true! One time Tommy tried to jump scare me and I broke his nose!”

“Jesus, okay. I'll make sure to bring you along next time so you can beat up my family members.”

“So what happens next?” Tubbo urged, “Did your dad fight back?”

“Well literally everybody was happy that my dad got decked. He was all pissed off and- well- up to that point, he was stopping me from eating the casserole. He was all like “Sweetheart, don’t eat the casserole, it tastes bad.” But now he was mad, and he *made* me eat some,” Ranboo rambled through the story, mimicking his father’s voice in a deep tone, “Yea. so it turns out I have an incredible intolerance to corn. So halfway through eating it, I threw up on the dog.

Tubbo burst into laughter at this point, “Oh my *god* , Ranboo. You’re making this up at this point.”

“I wish I was. We have not had another family barbeque since,” Ranboo smiled and opened his phone back up. Tapping through a couple of apps, he landed on another photo. It was of Ranboo’s grandfather again, he was sitting down at a small table with a cup of chocolate ice cream in his hands. If Tubbo was assuming that Ranboo was the one behind the camera, it looked like the two of them were sitting outside of a restaurant. It was dark outside, the scene was lit up by fluorescent lighting. Ranboo’s grandfather had a content expression on his face as the sight of a bustling city greeted them from the distance.

“While everyone was busy giving the dog a bath, the two of us snuck out and got ice cream,” he continued, “That was like, our thing. Whenever I was upset, or we were bored, we would go out to the friendly’s out near the highway. I would get a milkshake and he would get one scoop of chocolate ice cream.”

“That sounds really nice,” Tubbo smiled.

“Yea, I miss him,” Ranboo sounded more sad now.

“Is he. . ?” Tubbo started carefully.

“Oh no. He’s fine. But I’m an active missing persons case, so I haven’t really gotten the chance to pay a visit,” he paused, “Oh god, he’s probably so worried.”

Ranboo grimaced and curled in on himself. Sensing that the interaction was taking an uncomfortable turn, Tubbo whipped out his own phone and started scrolling through his own



photos.

The first one he landed on was one from maybe one or two years ago. The location was the Watson's living room, Wilbur and Tubbo's father sitting on the sofa with gaming controllers in their hands. Wilbur's face was one of deep concentration, whilst Schlatt's was expressive, with his eyes blown open and his teeth bared in a sleazy smile. He slid the phone over to Ranboo.

"I don't have any siblings, but that guy on the left," he pointed to Wilbur, "He's basically one of my brothers."

"Yea?" Ranboo implored.

"That's Wilbur, with the brown hair. And then there's his twin Technoblade, who's got this crazy long pink hair. And then- y'know- Tommy."

Ranboo nodded his head and then pointed to the other man sitting in the photo, "Who's that?"

"That's my dad."

"Oh," Ranboo said simply.

"What does that mean?"

"Oh, uh, I mean my dad doesn't really play video games. . .or has fun. He kinda just looks like he could be one of your friends."

"Him and Wilbur are good friends," Tubbo supplied, "I mean, my dad was good friends with Tom's dad for like, a decade and a half. But then they both had to go to rehab and AA meetings together- Wilbur for cigarettes, Dad for like, the hard stuff- and they got along great. But now they've both relapsed, so. . ."

“Oh, I’m-”

“-Every friday night, when Dad and I would go over to the Watson’s for dinner, the Two of them would play this video game,” Tubbo interrupted Ranboo’s apologies. It’s not his fault the people around him can’t take grief, “The goal of the game is to like, mine for ores and defeat this huge dragon. But the two of them, they would somehow manage to flood the entire world with water. It was crazy to watch.”

“I think I’ve played that game before at a friend’s house,” Ranboo commented. Tubbo swiped over to the next photo.

The next one was of Tommy in the back of his family’s car. His nose was in a bulky splint and blood stained the front of his t-shirt, but he was still sitting excitedly with a toothy grin on his face that was so wide his eyes were closed, and two thumbs up.

“You actually broke his nose?!” Ranboo choked, slapping a hand over his mouth.

“I told you! He scared the shit out of me and I punched him!”

“That hard?!”

“I’m stronger than I let on!” Tubbo defended.

Ranboo laughed joyously, but mellowed out as his gaze landed on the phone again.

“So that’s Tommy?” he asked softly.

Tubbo paused. Ranboo has never seen Tommy before.

He never will see Tommy. Or meet him. Or-

“Yea. Wait- lemmie get a better picture, he’s like fourteen in this one.”

It took him a moment, but he landed on one of Tommy maybe a month or so before he got sick. The picture was from his chorus concert. A simple portrait, with a serene smile and a nice button up shirt and tie. It was generic, but it showed Tommy in his whole. Underneath the boisterous forefront.

There was a fondness in Ranboo’s eyes as he took in the image, “He seems like a really nice person. I would’ve loved to meet him.”

“Yea,” Tubbo said in sentiment, “He would’ve called you a bitch.”

“Oh.”

“But he would’ve liked you.”

Suddenly, the argument in the front of the car grew louder and louder, to the point where every member of the family in front of them were shrieking and yelling at each other. At first it was easy to push aside with the language barrier, but now all that filled the two’s ears was their quarrel. Tubbo looked Ranboo in the eyes, furrowing his brow in an unsaid question. Ranboo just returned an even more concerned look, and directed his attention back to the front. Out of the family of six, all of their aggression was directed towards one guy in the seat behind the driver. He looked a little bit older than Tubbo and Ranboo, but his childish and mischievous expression did nothing to mature his age. His black hair was grown out and kept at bay with a beanie that Tubbo hadn’t seen him take off during this entire ride, even when it got particularly hot in the car. With all of the shouting now directed at the boy, his foolhardy demeanor evolved into one of reciprocated aggression. Though his attempts and rebuttles were trampled by even louder shouting.

Now, Tubbo wasn’t an expert with language, but by the way the guy was moving his hands theatrically with every emotion he brandished, he could tell that the guy was angry. He didn’t

even realize that Ranboo had interlocked his hand with his until the white knuckle grip started to bruise his knuckles. One look up at the fear in Ranboo's eyes, and he let the hand remain.

With a particularly loud statement, the car jerked to a stop, causing everyone- Tubbo and Ranboo especially- to smash into the seats in front of them. With a fiery breath, and one last shout of finality, the driver- father?- yelled at the guy in the back, and pointed his finger out of the window. The guy tried to protest, but he was shut down immediately. With an exasperated huff, he swung the door open and stormed out of the car.

"Did they just kick that guy out?" Tubbo whispered in surprise, making sure that only Ranboo could hear.

Ranboo didn't get a chance to respond. Instead of speeding away and leaving their family member in the dust, the rest of the family looked at them expectantly.

"Sorry?" Ranboo broke the tense silence. The father just exaggerated his point towards the side of the street outside.

"Tubbo, I think they're kicking *us* out as well," Ranboo said pointedly. And before the father had the chance to shout some more- as if in the blink of an eye- the two boys found themselves stranded on the side of the road with the guy who started the argument in the first place.

Said guy seemed to be seething.

Like, really mad.

With his arms a mix between being crossed and flailed all over the place, he started ranting Spanish curses and pacing in a circle. Tubbo and Ranboo just stood dumbfounded. Not even knowing what to say to each other, let alone the guy that just got the three of them stranded out on the side of the road. The heavy storm that was raging over had dulled down to a sprinkle, but the clouds ahead of them suggested that it was far from over. Ignore their

destination, they needed to get inside before they were stranded in a storm and everything they owned gets ruined.

“Do we. . .walk away?” Ranboo was not the guy to really handle social interactions like this.

“Where did you say you lived again?” Tubbo asked, looking over at the pacing man.

“New Mexico.”

“And you don’t know spanish?”

“No! I don’t know spanish!”

“How?!”

“Do you *see* how white I am! Plus I had, like, no friends so the inclination wasn’t there!” At this point they were doing that thing where they shouted at each other with no real malice at all. So not only were they yelling at each other, but the stranger with the beanie was still pacing around them, and the sky was growing darker and darker by the second.

“You don’t even know a little bit?” Tubbo whined.

“Uhhh,” Ranboo panicked, and then directed his attention towards the other guy, “Dónde está. . .la casa?” He tried, his voice reaching a high, uncertain pitch.

The man stopped in his tracks and looked him straight in the eyes.

“La casa?” he asked incredulously.

“Si?” Ranboo said, but it sounded more like a question, “Uh. . .lluvia,” he pointed up to the sky, “lluvia.”

The guy looked up to the pitch black clouds, and then back down to the pair. It had been made clear on his expression that he knew the two of them had no clue how to speak spanish.

“Cómo te llamas?”

“Ranboo,” he pointed to himself, and then to Tubbo, “Tubbo. . .usted?”

“Quackity.”

“Is that his name? Or is he casting a spell on us?” Tubbo butted in.

“I think it’s his name? I’m pretty sure we’re just exchanging basic questions that even, like, first graders know how to speak.”

Quackity spoke up again.

“Ya que mi familia ha decidido ser una carga de perras putas hoy, parece que estamos atrapados el uno con el otro. ¿A dónde van ustedes dos?”

They just stood in dead silence.

Should he say something? Or-

And before their conversation- or lack thereof- could carry on any further, Quackity let out an exaggerated sigh, and started walking away. The two teens stood there at a loss for what to do. But when the third man stopped, turned back around, and looked at them expectantly, they were quick to follow. Though it took them a moment to catch up.

“Um,” Ranboo tried again, this time fumbling for something in his backpack. What he pulled out was a thick tourist pamphlet that encompassed the general area around them. There was a whole bunch of them at the highway rest stop their bus dropped them off at, though he didn’t see Ranboo swipe one.

“We’re trying to get to Magma Beach volcano,” he offered, not even trying to translate it.

To be fair, it wasn’t that specific location they were going after. The mark on the list just said ‘a volcano’, this just happened to be the closest.

Quackity stopped and inspected the paper, his eyes squinted in almost an exaggerated manner. As quickly as he looked at the map, he nodded, and started walking again. The two would just have to hope that he was familiar with the location. To be fair, they didn’t have many other options if he didn’t. All they could do was walk.

And walk is what they did. For a really long time.

If Tubbo was being absolutely honest with himself, if he knew that running away involved so much walking, then maybe he would’ve re-evaluated his options.

Ranboo had his face in the map, paying no attention to where he was walking. Tubbo would say something, but he would much rather watch him trip or walk into something.

“ ‘A volcano. Any volcano.’ “ Ranboo quoted from the bucket list.

“Look, man. We were ten,” Tubbo refuted.

“True. True,” Ranboo hummed, “When I was ten, I thought *Florida* was a cool place to visit.”

“Isn’t that place all tropical though?”

“Yea, the beaches are nice. But you try living in Daytona for two years and then tell me how you feel about the place.”

“To be fair, I would never live in America.”

“Why?”

“Guns.”

“...Fair.”

They kept walking. The damp trees only shook harder and harder as the wind picked up, launching beads of rain water down onto the trio. All of their footsteps squelched against the muddy ground.

“I mean, the places on that list, they’re all a little bit stupid. Like there’s so many more influential places we could be going to. But I think the point is that they’re stupid,” he drawled. He had been thinking about that a lot lately; the childlike innocence of the bucket list. But Tubbo couldn’t be too mad. It was made out of crayon and there were drawings of bugs all over the edges. He smiled at the sentiment, mentally reassuring himself that the list was safe and sound in his backpack, right next to the urn.

“Where would *you* want your ashes spread?” Ranboo inquired.



“Boo, we didn’t make the list because we wanted to spread our own ashes.”

“The inquisition still stands,” he spoke, whilst attempting to fold back up the pamphlet, but he couldn’t seem to get it quite right.

“Hmm. The moon,” Tubbo smiled.

“What?” Ranboo choked on his surprise.

“Yea. You, Ranboo my beloved, are gonna spread my ashes on the moon.”

“And how am I gonna *get* to the moon?”

“Uhhh,” he held the sound, trying to stall for time, “You’d find a way.”

“Yea?”

“You could, like, build a little rocket and shoot my remains into space. That’s good enough.”

“Yea. When you die, I’ll do what you did and steal your urn from your dad and shoot it up to space,” Ranboo played along sarcastically, “I can get, who was it? Jack to help me build it and hope we don’t blow up a chunk out of the city street.”

“Aw, thank you. That’s really considerate. But I would not trust Jack Manifold with explosives if I were you.”

“Don’t you already?”

“Yea, and I shouldn’t”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Ranboo hummed. At this point, rain had started to sprinkle again, and there were still no signs of shelter.

“I think you’d like my hometown. It’s no Day-ton-a but it has its charms,” Tubbo hummed.

“Maybe I can visit one day,” the other supplied.

“I mean- I guess I’m going back after all of this is done. Maybe you can join me?” Ranboo didn’t reply to that one, occupied with thought. So Tubbo continued.

“Do you- what’s even gonna happen after all of this? Clearly you can’t go back to your parents.”

“I dunno,” Ranboo admitted, “Maybe I can figure something out, live with my Grandpa until I’m old enough.”

“You’re always welcome back in Britain. Tommy’s dad- Phil, he’s the adopting kids type.”

Ranboo hummed, it sounded uncertain and almost distasteful, “Maybe.”

“They would like you lots, I reckon.”

“I-” Ranboo was about to speak before his statement was cut short, his face scrunched up as he suddenly tripped over himself and plummeted to the ground. He made an ‘oof’ sound as his arms protected his face from crashing, but not without getting them covered in the wet mud the ground below them was covered in.

“Tubbo!” Ranboo scolded.

“What?!” Tubbo whined, making no move to help the other.

“What do you mean, what? You literally just tripped me!” To be fair, Ranboo didn’t make any move to stand up either. He just remained on the dirty, wet ground.

“I did *not*,” Tubbo frowned. He didn’t, he would be laughing his ass off already if he did.

“Tubbo, I felt you trip me. You’re much less gaslighting and more so confusing me.”

“I didn’t trip you big man. Surprisingly, I have *some* heart.”

Their bickering was halted but a clearing of the throat from the man in front of them. Tubbo had almost forgotten that he was there. But there he was, staring at them expectantly.

“What?” He asked, to which Quackity scowled and pointed behind him with his thumb,”Oh.”

And there, in front of them, was a big colorful sign that read ‘Magma Beach Volcano Exploration and Discovery Tours’

“We made it!” Tubbo cheered.

“We did, we did,” Ranboo slowly stood up, trying to pat the grime off of his pants, “Are you sure they’re even holding tours with this weather?”

“Uhh, I dunno. We might have to wait,” Tubbo bit the inside of his cheek.

“Aburrido!” Quackity exclaimed, drawing out the ‘i’ sound.

And then they were walking again. Behind the tour company, over the ‘No Trespassing’ fence-

*‘Ranboo, hoist me up. You’re super tall.’*

*‘Tubbo this is a shock fence.’*

- and up a slight hill for forty five minutes. And suddenly they were-

“Oh my god,” Tubbo breathed out his amazement. There in front of them, was a small stream of molten lava, slowly gurgling down the hill.

“There is *definitely* a reason they don’t want people trespassing,” Rambo commented, but there was still a childlike wonder to his deep tone.

And Tubbo smiled. He had to admit that his heart felt warm in a way he had never felt before. His hands were practically itching to open up his backpack and take the urn out.

“Muchas gracias,” Ranboo turned to thank the beanie wearing man, but like he was never there in the first place, he was gone, “I-”

“Ranboo, come on!” Tubbo grabbed his hand and speed walked over to the stream.

“Do we throw it *in* the lava, or near it?” Ranboo asked, not daring to go too close to the heat.

“Tommy would totally want to go in the lava,” Tubbo chirped.

“Wouldn’t it burn? Do ashes burn?”

“I think it’s the heart that counts.”

And, as quick as the childhood dream of visiting a volcano was, the ashes made their way down, and burned with the fury of a thousand suns, today and forever more.

---

Without the guidance of Quackity- who they hoped had made up with his family- it took the two four hours to walk to the nearest city and rent a motel room. A small, dingey place that overlooked the bustling city below.

If you were to ask Tubbo how they made wooden floors and wooden walls work together, they didn’t. It was god awful.

The beds didn’t look too comfortable either. The blankets were two grimy green quilts, and Tubbo wasn’t sure if he felt comfortable putting his head anywhere near those pillows.

Tubbo’s mental grievances did nothing to stop Ranboo from throwing his bag on to the (dirty) beds, and sliding out onto the balcony, clumsily falling into one of the fold out chairs.

It was late now, the sky was virtually pitch black, but if Tubbo could give one condolence to the state of the motel room, it was that the dirty yellow lights were cozy in a way. It kind of reminded him of his home back with his father.

Unzipping his backpack, he slipped out his best friend’s urn, and placed it on the television stand, smiling at it solemnly before tossing his phone onto the coffee table and looking back outside.

“What should we do for dinner?”

“There’s uh,” Ranboo snapped his fingers, trying to think, “I think I saw a corner store down the block a little. They probably have sandwiches.”

“We can do that,” Tubbo went for his wallet, only to be interrupted.

“I’ll pay,” the other offered.

“Ohhh, I didn’t know I was living with a rich man,” Tubbo teased. Ranboo just snickered, “I’ll go get the food then. I could use a walk.”

“Really? Even after walking two days on foot? My legs are killing me,” Ranboo droaned.

“What can I say, I’m energetic.”

“I’ll say so.”

“Right, I’ll be back. Don’t burn down the house!”

“This is a motel room,” Ranboo hollered. And then the door was slammed shut.

*And then, Tubbo’s phone was buzzing.*

*A phone call, from an unidentified number. A cacophony of numbers that all blend together and an area code that does not belong to the country.*

*And now, this isn’t his phone. And this isn’t even a number that Tubbo would probably recognize, but something in Ranboo’s bones draws his hand to hover over the device.*

*He shouldn't.*

*But he looks over to Tommy's urn- for just a moment- and he does.*

*"Hello?" he speaks, and swings his legs up to rest on the railings of the porch.*

*"Hello- Tubbo?" A voice crackles from the other end. It's heavily accented, yet deep and smooth with the honey like flow of a singer. Though still there was a slight crackle to the man's words, a rasp. Besides the character of the man's voice, there was also a heavy fog of emotion; desperation almost.*

*"No- no, it's not Tubbo. He's out right now," he fiddled with the drawstring of his jacket.*

*"He is?"*

*"Yea."*

*"And you have his phone?"*

*". . .Yea."*

*"And you would be?"*

*"Um, Ryan, sir," he took one listen at the aggression in the man's voice and decided to give him his less endearing name, "I'm a friend of Tubbo's."*

*“Yea?” the man let out a deep sigh, and there was a clinking noise from the other side, “He won’t reply to any of our calls or messages. He’s been missing for a month. We don’t- we don’t know where he is.”*

*And oh. He sounds so sad.*

*“Yea,” Ranboo breathed, “Yea, he’s certainly. . .”*

*“I’m just worried. His best friend- my baby brother passed away a couple of months ago and he’s- I don’t- everyone back home is so worried about him.”*

*“Tommy?” he dared.*

*Another deep sigh, “. . . Yea. So he’s told you about him?”*

*“I’ve heard a lot about him. He. . .really misses him.”*

*“It was traumatizing for all of us. But Tubbo- those two were inseparable. Shit- the ICU let him spend the night in the bed with him. That’s against so many rules.”*

*“I can see it. He tries to stay strong, but I can see it. He holds so much guilt,” and here Ranboo was. He didn’t even know the man’s name, yet here he was speaking about the death of someone he didn’t even know. No matter how much he wishes he did.*

*“Oh Tubbo. . . it’s not his fault he wasn’t there. Has he talked to you about this?”*

*“Yea.”*



*“Tommy wasn’t really there near the end. At that point the kid had a killer fever, Sepsis, and I think they put him on a morphine drip. He- he was so out of it,” there was a pause where the man shuddered, sobbed, and then continued, “He just thought he was going to sleep.”*

*Ranboo’s heart clenched. Even if he never knew Tommy, no one deserves to go through that, and at so young.*

*“I’m so sorry,” was all Ranboo could say, but it didn’t feel like enough. How could it ever be enough? This kid was dead, and no sorry could fix that.*

*“Is Tubbo okay? Please just tell me that,” the man spoke through tears, his voice restrained.*

*“He’s okay,” Ranboo could give him that at least, “He’s okay. I think he’s just trying to figure out how to grieve right now, and him being gone- being here is part of that.”*

*There was a long pause.*

*“Yea, yea,” he breathed, “yea. I just hope he figures this all out.”*

*“Me too,” he breathed into the cold night air. The statement, so delicate, so personal, was lifted up into the sky, whisked away by the gentle breeze, left to settle with the songs of the shivering crickets that nestled in the long grass.*

*“I hope you find what you’re looking for, Ryan,” the phone hummed.*

*“Me too,” he hummed back.*

*“Keep my. . .keep Tubbo safe, alright?”*

*“But you don’t even know me,” he dared.*

*“I don’t, but if the kid’s made it this far without getting kidnapped or killed, then I think I can trust you at least a little bit,” the voice laughed.*

*“Fair point, fair point. If I do kidnap him, that’s gonna be real embarrassing for you, though.”*

*“You best not embarrass me then,” the man on the other side of the phone had such a genuine warm laugh, despite the asthmatic rasp to them.*

*Ranboo smiled.*

*“I will. I’ll keep him safe.”*

*And oh, he could hear the bittersweet smile from across the phone.*

*And then he could hear footsteps approaching the door.*

*And with that, the call was hung up, the phone returned to it’s prior resting space, as if it was never moved in the first place.*

And Tubbo was back in the room.

“Oh Ranboo~ Look what I found at the corner shop,” Tubbo sang as he held up a small box and waved it around to add a sense of showmanship.

The item of intrigue being a stick and poke tattoo kit. Sure, maybe it’s not all the most safe; it’s cheap and unsanitary, and Tubbo’s pretty sure this kit expired in the early 2000’s. But

*come on*, how could they just *not*.

“Oh, stick and poke,” Ranboo sounded delighted, “I used to do that all the time for my classmate in the bathroom during lunch.”

“Really?!”

“Yea, I’m pretty good at it,” he grabbed the box and inspected it, “Though I just used a sewing needle and some pen ink, so this might come out a little different.”

“Yo! You have to tattoo me!” he paused, “I have to tattoo you!”

“There is no way I am letting you leave a permanent mark on my body.”

“Come on! All your classmates let you do it!”

“Yea, cause they were ghetto kids that wanted to rebel against their parents, and I needed the money.”

“Ranboo, it’s like a friendship bracelet that you can’t take back!”

“I,” he bounced the box around in his hands a couple of times before coming to a decision, “okay, okay. But I get to choose the place and design of mine.”

“Deal!”

“We’ll start with yours, so I can teach you how to do it,” with his teeth, he ripped the box open, the instructional pamphlet went flying to the ground, but both of the boys disregarded it.

“Let’s do it on the porch, the view is nice,” Tubbo suggested, his demeanor calming down.

“The lighting's bad,” Ranboo kissed his teeth.

“I’ll use my phone flashlight.”

“Alright,” Ranboo hummed, fiddling with the needle, “Where do you want it?”

Tubbo sat criss cross in the chair Ranboo situated himself in earlier. Ranboo hadn’t sat down yet, instead he found himself hunched over the table with all of the supplies. It was quite the sight with him being unreasonably tall, and the table being short even for Tubbo.

“Uhh, lemmie think.”

“Usually when people get tattoos, they’re either really important, or really stupid. I could do. . . a duck? A duck named Benson,” Ranboo offered. Tubbo hummed in consideration.

The city lights sure did seem to sparkle tonight. It was as if it’s own pollution had diluted away the real stars to shine brighter themselves.

“Could you do it on the back of my hand?” Tubbo asked softly, holding out his right hand.

The breeze was just a little bit too cold, nipping at his fingers. But the cold felt new, energizing.

“And could you do, like, the morse code for ‘I love you’?”

The trees sprouted from the ground like mighty earthly cannons, leaves shooting out to the sides.

“I love you?”

And when did?

“Yea.”

And when did the world become so pretty again?

“That’s very sweet.”

When did the colors become so vibrant, sounds become so song-like, air become so breathable?

When did Tubbo’s hair grow longer? When did his eyes shine brighter, his smile spread wider?

When did it suddenly feel like *he* wasn’t dead as well?

When did ‘I love you’ become-

“It was the last thing he said to me before he died.”

Chapter End Notes

You can tell this is set in a fictional universe because either there is a magical volcano in america, or two pubescent boys just strolled through country borders with no care in the world.

# The "World's Steepest" Ski Hill

## Chapter Summary

Content Warnings: talks of death/ grief, internalized trans phobia

## Chapter Notes

OH MY GOD MY FOOT FELL ASLEEP OH MY GOD

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

If you were to ask Tubbo, at any point in his life, about what he wanted to do with his future, the very first thing that he would say was that he wanted to get the fuck out of his home town. Everything was the same, same, same, and who would want to stay and rot in the boring old suburb their entire life when there was so much out there to explore.

He hated the trees, he hated the buildings, he hated half the people that lived there. But most of all, he hated how it felt like a prison.

If you were to ask him now, though, he would say that he would give anything to be back there right now.

Two days in a hospital is far too long.

Sure, maybe it's fun for a couple of hours, when you break a bone and the nurses give you a whole bunch of frozen ice pops. But when you stay in a hospital for longer than that, then there's clearly something wrong. And suddenly the cream colored walls and all the beeping become less inviting, and more like a promise. A promise that those beeps will stop.

He had somehow managed to keep a long enough rest to skip through the night, now sporting a crick in his back from the awkward position he was laying in. But he still felt so tired.

Every couple of minutes, Tommy's breathing would splutter, or he would shift uncomfortably in some way, and every time that happened, Tubbo was up and checking to make sure that his friend was alright.

So when he was sleeping, it didn't feel like he was sleeping, and when he was awake, it didn't feel like he was awake. Like he was coasting through the day, sure, sometimes he would blink and he would find himself looking at something or talking to someone, but none of that mattered because here he was, wrapped up in a thick blanket in the ICU waiting room, and it was dark out again.

Many a pitiful glances were thrown his way; the sight of a small boy by himself in the uncomfortable chairs of the waiting room. Waiting.

He knew what he was waiting for. And it wasn't for his friend to come trotting out, smiles and all.

The three other Watson's weren't here right now. They were in Tommy's room, seeing him off. Tubbo could imagine them, all crowded around the head of the bed, caressing and cradling Tommy like he was glass. Saying goodbye, and that they love him, and that he could rest. And he could imagine their hearts beating out of their chests, the vocal cords that were itching to scream in despair, or yell, or ruin, yet they didn't. Because that was Tommy's last living moments and they needed to make it as loving and calming as possible.

He knew that's what they were doing, because he was supposed to be there, doing it too.

He knew he was, because the doctor came up to all four of them and said, "He's on his way out." And words like asphyxiation and organ failure. And Phil started crying, and Wilbur started crying, and he didn't cry. But that was okay, it was just the shock, surely.

And he knew because he looked over and saw that Technoblade was ramrod stiff, and even his eyes were welling up with tears of devastation.

And he knew that all of this meant that he should be in there too. That despite his own discomfort, he should be in there for Tommy's comfort, but he just *couldn't*.



He made some lame excuse, “*He should be with his family.*” and set up camp in the public waiting room, and spent the following hours watching the street light in the parking lot attract bugs.

No one had come out to check on him. His father had texted him many times, asking if Tommy was okay, asking if *he* was okay. He only managed to give one half hearted response.

He didn’t really feel bad. He didn’t really feel anything at all. None of this felt real, and you can’t feel things if they aren’t real.

. . .

Yea.

In some desperate attempt at grasping on to the situation, he opened up his notes app, and started typing. Maybe it was just to sort out his thoughts, maybe, just maybe, if he wrote it down, and looked at it, it would somehow magically become real. Nevertheless, he wrote.

‘My name is Tubbo Underscore, and my best friend is going to die.’

He couldn’t process what he was reading. Each word burned into his retinas, sunk into his brain and dissolved into thin air. It was as if he could blink, and the statement would have never been there in the first place.

That didn’t work. Maybe he needed to say it out loud.

He looked around for a moment. There were people in the room. Too many to hear him talking to himself. So on a mission to make himself not sound crazy- whether it helped his cause or not- he walked up to a random person.

She was a woman, maybe in her mid forties. Her brown hair was tied up into a tight bun and she wore these reading glasses that made her eyes super huge. She was wearing a dirty knit cardigan that was covered in pins, mostly things about being a teacher.

When he stepped in front of her, she faltered for a moment, and then closed the book she was reading to look up at him.

“Hello?” She said politely. Oh, she was definitely a teacher. Any other person would’ve given him attitude for interrupting their personal time.

“My name is Tubbo Underscore, and my best friend is going to die,” he said, barely holding any emotion. He looked her in the eyes as he said it, he watched the emotions pass through her. Good, if she was feeling things; real, finite emotions, then this situation had to be real.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” she apologized, though it sounded very uncomfortable.

She went to say something more, but he just wordlessly turned around and walked away, returning to his home base at the chair in the corner.

. . .

That didn’t work. Maybe this wasn’t real then. Maybe Tommy would come out of this just fine, and the Watsons were just busy with the doctors getting him discharged.

Yea, that’s it. Tubbo is just overreacting. Wilbur was right, everyone is going to get through this, and one day they’re all going to laugh about it. Yea.

A buzzing from his pockets interrupted his train of thoughts.

Shuffling around and picking up his phone, the screen flashed with a picture of his friend from the local convenience store. Jack Manifold. Jack was calling him.

Clicking accept, and holding it up to his ear, he held his breath.

“Tubbo! Where are you guys?” Jack shouted from the other side of the line. He could just make out loud music and talking in the background of the call. And Jack's voice had an intoxicated slur to it.

“What? What do you mean?” he asked, his quiet tone opposing the loud one.

“You, Tom, and Wil said you were gonna come to the party tonight. The big one all the rich shitheads are throwing,” Jack reminded. Shit. The party was tonight. Wilbur and Tommy promised they were going to go, and Tubbo had said that he would tag along.

There was a shuffling from the other side of the phone, and then a new voice rang through.

“Tubbo? Where’s Wilbur?” Niki asked, sounding equally as drunk.

“Um. He’s a little busy right now,” Is all Tubbo said. For some reason the words just wouldn’t come out of his mouth. How could they? They weren’t real. This situation was not real.

“But he promised me that he would come and be the designated driver. He made a big deal out of it and everything,” Niki spoke.

“He’s uh. We’re at the hospital right now,” his voice wavered uncontrollably.

“What?! Why? Is everything okay?” he couldn’t tell who said that one, maybe it was a mix of both of them at once.

Now would be the time where he would take a deep breath. But he couldn't. He couldn't even muster up a little bit of air.

He choked, and then spoke.

"Tommy's dying."

And then it was real.

Tommy was dying. Maybe he was already dead.

The other side of the line went dead silent. Not even the bustle of the party was uttering a peep now. So, for a breathless moment. Everything was quiet.

". . .What?" Niki's voice was high and fragile, like it could shatter like glass.

"Wilbur's- they're in there right now saying goodbye," he breathed. The words so quiet that you could easily lose them to the wind.

"Oh my god," Jack's was almost as quiet, "Oh my god. Oh my god."

"What happened?" Niki butted in.

"Pneumonia. Pneumonia and- and I don't even know what Sepsis *is* ."

"Oh my god," Jack was starting to sound like a broken record, and if Tubbo really focussed, he could hear quiet crying, "Where is- where are you guys? We're- fuck- we're drunk, we can get a taxi over there."

He gave them the name of the hospital.

“You should come soon. Wilbur will need someone,” he whispered.

“Tubbo, are *you* okay?” Niki asked, not sounding too okay herself. There was movement coming from the other side of the phone. Footsteps and crickets chirping, murmuring from far away; Jack calling up a taxi.

“I don’t know.”

He kept eyeing the entryway. For doctors, for one of the Watsons, anything.

There was a sob-like shudder from the other side of the line, “Okay. That’s okay. Do you need us to stay on?” She asked.

In the time he was thinking up a reply, someone showed up in the entryway. Technoblade.

He looked so weak, and plain, and even from this far away, Tubbo could see him shaking.

“I- no. I need to get off now,” he said quickly, and before Niki could reply, he hung up the call. He pushed himself up out of the chair and stumbled towards the pink haired man. Techno made his way as well, and they met in the middle.

Not even Techno’s emotionless facade could cover up his devastation; his red eyes. Tubbo read every inch of his face, waiting breathlessly. Techno’s mouth moved, trying to utter out the words, but it was as if the words were plucked; stolen from his vocal chords.

“He’s-” Techno shook his head and bit his lips, “He’s gone, Tubbo. He passed away.”

And for a moment, the world stopped turning, and the air around them cramped; unbreathable.

“ *Oh* ,” is all he could say, and then he was in Techno’s arms.

He had never hugged Technoblade before, neither of them were ever ones for touch. But he had imagined before what it would be like. Strong and firm; with a purpose. Comforting and protecting. But right now, it felt as if Tubbo was the one doing those things.

He could barely hear the older crying, but the wet spot on his shoulder that was only growing larger and larger gave away any of his attempts to hide it. Techno just kept shaking and shaking, trying to make himself as small as possible and hide his face away from the onlookers into Tubbo’s shoulder.

Tubbo, it was as if Tubbo had just frozen in time. Not blinking, not speaking. Just standing, holding Techno, dumbfounded.

It was as if something was not clicking in his brain. This couldn’t be happening. No, no. He’s fallen asleep, and this is a dream, and he needs to wake up and call Niki and Jack back and apologize to them for making them leave their party for a false alarm,

What did his dad say about dreams? Pinch yourself, and if you feel pain, then you’re not dreaming.

He didn’t need to pinch himself, something in his chest hurt already enough. Something cramping and swelling throughout his entire body. Like a black hole in his heart that threatened to suck him up and collapse in on himself. His fingertips felt all itchy, his mouth tasted all bitter.

His mind was racing with thought upon thought, worry upon query. Who would be his friend now? Who would he walk to school with? Who would help him read out hard words or eat his carrots for him? Who would laugh louder than a car horn? Smile brighter than the sun?

What now?

Where does he go from here?

He can't. It's that simple. He can't carry on. He'll be stuck in this moment forever. He'll stand here and say-

"Oh," into Technoblade's hair, as tears try to usher themselves to his eyes, but the gate just wont open.

"Oh."

---

Tommy always hated the winter season. He said it was much too cold, and much too dirty looking, and he hated wearing heavy coats.

One time, when they were thirteen, the two of them took their shoes off and made a bet to see who could run around the block the most times before their feet got too cold. Tubbo had only made it around twice before his toes burned too much to continue. Tommy, ever basking in his bragging right, ran around the block five times.

Tubbo had never seen someone so proud to get minor frostbite and a fever.

Afterward, they had made a game of who could fit the most fuzzy socks on their feet. They had ended up tearing one of them, throwing it in the fire, and then acting like they had never seen it in the first place.

Tubbo didn't mind the winter, but Jesus Christ, heavy winter coats were expensive. Especially for someone that only had the cash on him. But he needed the coat, especially since the snow was now up to his knees in some places. Ranboo took one look at the price of the ski lodge coats and offered up a thrift store.

And that's how the two boys found themselves donned in layers of thrift store shirts. They looked stupid, but they were warm.

Tubbo was the one to put a ski hill on the list. Every year he would indulge in the sport with his distant family, and he had never had more fun in his life.

"One time, when I was skiing with my family, I crashed and broke my arm," he said, as the two of them looked up at the hill. Ten-year-old him had chosen this course specifically because he had seen a pamphlet once about this hill being the steepest in the world.

The advertisement was definitely a little exaggerated.

"Oh god," Ranboo mumbled, already anticipating the story.

"I passed out for a couple of minutes, and when my dad found me, the bone was sticking out."

"Jesus. And you said you can ski?"

"Oh yeah. I'm pretty good at it, too."

"I have never skied once in my life."

"Really?"



“Yes, really. I’ve lived in the south. I’ve never even seen snow before,” Ranboo complained, as he shivered like a leaf. The guy was clearly not used to the cold in the slightest.

“Well that’s no good. You can barely even walk without tripping,” he teased.

“I’m still convinced you’re tripping me.”

. . .

“I want frozen yogurt,” Tubbo blurted.

“What? It’s literally freezing outside!” Ranboo protested.

“It’s never too cold for frozen yogurt.”

“Tubbo, no-”

With the line finally parting, the two boys walked up to the counter, smiling at the bedraggled cashier worker.

“Welcome to Freezy’s, what would you like to order?” he asked, with no particular enthusiasm to his voice.

“I’ll take a large strawberry with cookie dough. Just, like, don’t hold back on the cookie dough,” Tubbo responded cheerfully.

“A kid’s size chocolate please,” Ranboo said, defeated.

With a customer service smile, the employee made the desserts, piling on hoards of cookie dough. As he started fiddling with the cash register, Tubbo pulled a card out of his wallet. It had a picture of Tommy on it, incredibly awkward and uncomfortable in his work uniform.

“Can I use the employee’s discount?” He asked, sliding the card over, “It’s my friend’s card,” he tacked on.

“Uh, this is from one of our foreign locations,” he murmured.

“Yea? But he still works under this chain.”

“Sir, I don’t know if I can qualify the discount if he’s not living in America.”

“Oh trust me, he’s not living in Europe either.”

“What?”

“Oh, he passed away. But he’s still registered as an employee and he would want me to use and abuse that fact.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” the employee frowned.

“It’s okay,” he said, like an automated response.

“I’m like, so sorry. I couldn’t imagine losing my best friend.”

“I can’t either. I’m kinda coasting right now,” Tubbo said, not dropping his careless demeanor.

“Aw man. Just take the ice cream,” the worker pushed the two cups of frozen yogurt and the card towards them.

“Uh, thanks man,” and who was Tubbo to deny free stuff.

Ranboo stayed unbelievably silent the entire time. He grabbed both of the cups and rushed the two of them out of the shop.

“I can’t believe you just got free frozen yogurt from that guy,” he expressed, partly embarrassed, partly amazed.

“I know,” Tubbo grabbed his large cup and started digging into it, “I’m pretty sure there was a Bojack Horseman episode about that once.”

“You watched Bojack Horseman?”

“Yea. Right after the funeral, I laid down and watched it all in one sitting. And then, like, a day after, Techno came over and we watched the entire thing again.”

“Tubbo, that’s like forty hours!”

“Oh, I know. The headache afterwards was amazing. But why think when you can watch a bunch of talking animals make references you don’t understand.”

Ranboo took a bite of his frozen yogurt and frowned, “It’s way too cold for this.”

Tubbo frowned as well, “Yea, this kinda tastes really bad. It tastes all artificial.”

“Didn’t you eat this stuff back home?”

Tubbo hummed in thought, “To be fair, it wasn’t that great at home either. But Tommy would do this thing where he mixed a shit ton of honey and berries into it, that was pretty good.”

“Are you allowed to do that?”

“No, but that didn’t stop him. Didn’t stop him from falling asleep in the broom closet either. It is a miracle he never got fired.”

“I used to work in the kitchen of this catholic church. One year we threw this holiday craft fair and I had an allergic reaction to the pine trees and I scared this little girl. I was promptly fired.”

“Ranboo, how many things could you possibly be allergic to?”

“I don’t know, but all I know is that one second I was serving this family some soup, and the next I was on the ground, covered in soup.”

Tubbo laughed as they neared the start of the ski course. The two of them discreetly dumped their half eaten ice cream into the nearest trash can and rushed to get their skis.

“Tubbo, I still don’t know how to ski,” Ranboo warned as he fiddled with his goggles.

“You’ve surfed before, right?”

“Yea.”

“It should be something like that.”

Ranboo thought about that for a moment, looking at Tubbo, and then the people skiing down the side of the hill.

“It is absolutely nothing like surfing.”

“You can always chicken out and ride the lift back down while I ski.”

“See, you say that like it’s a cowardly thing. But I will feel no remorse as I watch you snap your arm in half from the skies.”

They shuffled towards the ski lift and took their seat, Tubbo looking way more eager than Ranboo. He held Tommy’s urn tightly in his lap, tracing his ungloved fingers delicately across the porcelain. The accent was silent for a good while. If he was being honest, Tubbo quite enjoyed the way the snow fell on the pine trees. It almost looked magical. It reminded him of when he was a kid, skiing with his nan and drinking hot cocoa afterward; nice and homemade, with extra large marshmallows.

Maybe he could guilt trip his way into some free hot beverages as well.

The wind brushed coldy against his face, biting his cheeks and leaving his nose rosy. He could already imagine this feeling tenfold when he’s vaulting down the slope.

“A couple years back, my aunt went out into the woods and got mauled by coyotes,” Ranboo blurted, looking at the large expanse of trees. Tubbo snickered.

“Like, just attacked?”

“Yea, it was crazy. It was the weirdest funeral I’ve ever been to.”

“Did you eat something you’re allergic to and vomit?”

“Surprisingly no. All of my kid nieces and nephews crowded the food table and I didn’t even get to eat anything.”

“What could have even provoked those coyotes to attack your aunt?”

“I have no clue. But my theory is because she always wore these god awful outfits and they were so bright they hurt the coyote's eyes.”

Tubbo laughed.

“I mean, I would’ve attacked her too,” he tacked on.

“How is every single one of your family members actually insane?”

“I should be the one asking you that.”

“I’ve never really had a big family,” Tubbo responded, dampening the mood a little, but not enough to make the conversation drab, “It’s always been just me and my dad. Plus the Watson’s, if that counts.”

“From what I’ve heard of them, they don’t seem too sane either.”

Tubbo laughed at that.

“My dad was friends with Phil long before I was born. But he would get arrested, like, a lot. So I would spend a lot of time at Phil’s house,” he recalled in fond memory, “The longest was when I was fourteen. He got taken away for a year for possession of heavy drugs. But I didn’t

even care. Do you know how cool that is for a fourteen year old? A year long sleepover at your best friend's house. *The Technoblade* has a polar bear stuffie.”

“Every time I slept over at my grandpa's house, I had to sleep on the couch and my legs were too long. The entire place smelled like cat piss and trains would always ride by super loudly. He made the best food though.”

“Yea?”

“Yea. He would do this thing where he would mix in sweet peas with box mac and cheese. Now that was top tier shit.”

“Ew! Oh my god!” Tubbo irked, making a face of disgust like a child would.

“To be fair, I think he first made it to pull a joke on me. But I ended up really liking it so the joke’s on him,” he said proudly.

Their giggles tapered off as they neared the top, now was as good a time as ever. He opened up the urn and outstretched his arms. Both of the boys watched with a fond smile as the ashes flew away and settled into the snow. Though they couldn’t relish for too long as Tubbo had to shove the container back into his backpack and launch down the slope.

-

The ride down the hill was beautiful. Fast. Exhilarating. He had never felt more alive as he *flew* through the snow, a smile plastered across his face so wide that his teeth sparkled brighter than the snow.

Ranboo did surprisingly well, considering he had never skied before. He had almost made it the entire way when his skis faltered on seemingly nothing and he tumbled the rest of the way.

At least he couldn't blame Tubbo this time.

-

As they settled down in their lodge room, Ranboo had begun drying his hair off with one of the complementary towels. He not-so delicately threw it on top of his head and violently scrubbed it down. Tubbo fell backward onto the bed and started to slip his many layers of socks off.

"I got a haircut once, and the barber said you shouldn't dry your hair off with a towel because it will damage it," he pointed out.

"Fuck him, I use two in one shampoo," Ranboo snarked, and continued to dry himself off from the heaps of melted snow he rolled in.

"Ew."

Ranboo placed his bag down and started stripping off his many layers of overcoats, "These clothes smell so bad."

"They're from the thrift store, what did you expect?"

"I dunno but, like, it's such a specific smell. You only ever smell it in thrift stores."

Tubbo was about to pipe up a reply when his phone started buzzing. He frowned and looked down at the device he slipped out of his pocket. It was a call from his dad. Didn't he block him?

He bit this inside of his cheek and ignored the worried glance that Ranboo shot him.



“I’ll . . . be right back,” he murmured and quickly shuffled out of the room. He didn’t hear Ranboo’s reply as he shot out into the hallway and slid down the wall so he was sitting on the carpeted floor.

No one else was currently occupying the halls, so the only thing stopping him from picking up the call at this point was fear.

He took a deep breath. It rang.

It rang again.

And he clicked accept.

“Hullo?” He borderline whispered into the phone, secretly hoping that it was just a mistake, that it was just a really clever spam call.

“Toby?” his father’s voice cracked from across the line. And oh, he hadn’t heard that voice in so long. It didn’t matter how much he smoked, it didn’t matter how many times he got arrested, that was his dad, that voice was home.

“Hey Dad,” he breathed.

“Oh god, Tubbo, I’ve missed you so much,” he could hear the emotion in his father’s voice.

“I’ve missed you too,” but that same emotion was lacking in his own.

“You have to come home, baby. I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry,” his father was always so quick to tears.

“I will. I will come home, Pa. I didn’t leave because of you.”

“I’m clean again, bud. I am. I was dumb, I know-”

“I didn’t leave because of you,” he repeated, “I left because of me.”

“Please, bud. I miss you so much. The house is so lonely without you.”

Tubbo’s heart was beating out of his chest.

“Pa. . .”

His father sniffled, and chuckled a little, “Baby, Phil wants his son’s urn back.”

Tubbo dropped his head limply down to his knees, “I have to go, I’m sorry.”

“Wait-”

And with a click, the call was ended. And Tubbo was left alone. He took a deep breath, running his fingers along his frosty cold face. In and out.

Everything was okay.

. . .

He didn't need to think about any of this. No. This was a problem for when he got home, and he could talk to everybody in person.

Yea.

When this was all over, and he visited all five places, and he gathered up the courage to return back home, he would fix things. He just has to fix himself first.

He could hear Ranboo shuffling around in the room from the other side of the wall. He should probably go back inside before his friend becomes worried.

The room grew quiet by the time he pushed the door open.

And his heart stuttered in his chest.

Ranboo stopped, dead in his tracks, staring at Tubbo. A need was punctured up at his hip, fully compressed.

For a minute, both of them just stared at each other in dead silence. Both terrified to make a word. Ranboo's eyes were blown so wide he looked like a fish out of water.

Until, finally, he spoke.

"Tubbo, I can explain-"

"Are you doing fucking heroin?!" Tubbo shouted, slamming the door behind him. Ranboo dropped the needle to the floor.

"What? No!" he stood up, hands out in front of himself.

“I can’t believe you’ve been fucking doing heroin this entire time! How did you even hide that?” his hands were trembling. Of course. Of course Ranboo was doing drugs. And *heroin*? He loved Ranboo, a lot. But how could he stand there and watch him kill himself?

“Tubbo, I-”

“I can’t believe you! I can’t believe this!” he shouted even louder, his face going hot.

“Tubbo, it’s not-”

“Ranboo! You-”

“IT’S NOT HEROIN, TUBBO! IT’S TESTOSTERONE!” Ranboo shouted the loudest, and the room returned to a dead quiet.

Breathing, processing, and then-

“What?” Tubbo said, all quiet.

“It’s testosterone. I’m trans,” Ranboo looked him dead in the eyes, a frown on his face.

“Oh,” Tubbo said, relieved, “Okay then.”

. . .

“Okay?” Ranboo repeated incredulously, “Just- okay?”

“Well, yea. It’s not that big of a deal.”

“What do you mean it’s not that big of a deal?” Ranboo urged, this time taking the mantle as the aggressor.

“I mean, you didn’t have to hide it from me. You’re Ranboo no matter what,” Tubbo said, trying to maintain calm.

“I didn’t *want* to tell you! It was a big deal to *me* ! I didn’t want to come out right now!” Tears were streaming down the taller boy’s cheeks. Whether they were from anger or sadness, Tubbo didn’t know. Maybe both.

“Ranboo, it’s not-”

“I’m homeless!” Ranboo shouted, shooting his arms out, “My parents hate me! I hate me! Now you’re gonna hate me! And- Fuck! You’re the first person I’ve ever known, that didn’t know. And forgive me for wanting to hang out, and be a boy, and having you look at me, and see a boy. No questions asked.”

“You *are* a boy!” he interjected.

“Yea, and me being a boy ruined my life!”

“Don’t say that, Ranboo,” Tubbo slowly stepped closer.

Ranboo didn’t respond to that. He looked away.

“I didn’t want you to know,” he repeated.

“I’m sorry,” he stepped closer, “And I’m sorry for being a dick.”

Ranboo sat down on the bed, hiding his face in his hands. Tubbo hugged the top half of him, wrapping his hands around the other’s head.

“Ranboo, I misspoke earlier. You can be a boy, or a girl, or anything in the world and I wouldn’t care. You’re still my friend.”

Ranboo sniffled.

“You don’t hate me.”

“Never.”

“Then why am I still unhappy about this?”

“You’re allowed to be mad. You can be mad about this until your dying days.”

At this point, Ranboo hugged back.

“Can we just pretend this never happened?”

“Yea,” he moved and sat down next to his friend on the end of the bed, “You’re Ranboo. My (second) best friend with a dick, who casually does heroin every couple weeks.”

Ranboo laughed under his breath, “We can talk about it later, when I’m ready.”

Tubbo hugged him again and hummed. Without warning, he flopped both of them to lay down on the bed. Ranboo made an ‘oof’ sound in response.

And there they laid, in a somewhat more comfortable silence. Both were left to settle after the revelation that just happened between the two.

“You wanna know something about me that no one else on this Earth does? As like, payback?”

Ranboo shuffled to turn around and face Tubbo. His eyes mischievous.

“One time, Tommy and I got in this big fight, and I keyed his dad’s car.”

“Dude, what?” the other exclaimed, flabbergasted.

“Which is like, horrible because his dad’s so nice. And to this day, no one knows who did it.”

“Oh my god,” Ranboo gawked, “How bad was the fight that you pulled a Carrie Underwood?”

Tubbo bit his lip.

“I found out that Tommy bought some pills off my dad.”

Ranboo looked at him, sad.

“I was mad, because my dad was selling, and cause he was buying. And he said it was a one time thing, but I think he may have been lying.”

He continued.

“I’m not saying he was an addict or anything. I know what addicts look like. But I’m saying that he’s done drugs more than zero times and that is way too many times than I am happy with.”

Ranboo held his hand, a wordless way of saying ‘I’m sorry’.

“I had percocets before. Like, after my wisdom teeth surgery. I didn’t like them though. I’d have maybe forty minutes before it became impossible to keep my eyes open.”

Tubbo chuckled, “Oh no. You hooligan.”

“I swear, I would just knock out. I slept for fifteen hours straight, it was terrible.”

“I was supposed to get my wisdom teeth out before all of this happened.”

“Yea? I got to keep three of mine. They put it in this kid’s elephant necklace. I still have them somewhere. ‘No clue what to do with them.’”

“That’s like, serial killer shit.”

“Oh yea. It was real awkward asking for them.”

Their lighthearted conversation dissolved into silence once again, this time more comfortable than before.



It gave Tubbo's mind some time to think.

"Ranboo, do you really hate yourself?"

Ranboo remained silent for a moment.

"No. I don't really hate myself."

He sighed, and then shifted over. He looked up at the white ceiling.

"I think I just loved myself more when I didn't know there was a real reason I was unhappy."

"I think I just hate that in order for me to be me, I have to sacrifice everything I've ever known."

"I would never take it back, though."

Tubbo wrapped his arms around the other's torso, and watched the snow fall from the sky outside the window.

"I'm so glad I met you, Ranboo."

And he would be lying if he said that the last thirty minutes didn't make him exhausted. If not the emotional turmoil, then the extreme skiing.

His eyes slipped closed with one final thought. He only had one location left.

## Chapter End Notes

You can tell this is set in a fictional universe because i have no clue how skiing works but i know it's not that easy, Ranboo aint messing around

# La Jolla

## Chapter Summary

Tubbo learns about what it means to grieve

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The beginning of the end started with an exhale.

“Tommy and I were best friends even before we were born.”

And ended with an inhale.

“Our parents were good friends. And they had plans for us. The only time I spent alone from Tommy was the four months I was born before him.”

They chose to do an open casket funeral service before they turned his best friend into ashes. Tubbo thought it was a little bit fucked, to gaze upon Tommy’s dead body while everyone else threw a party, but he was here nonetheless, and he was delivering a speech. Because wherever Tubbo went, Tommy went.

“He was so much more than my best friend, he was family.”

Though if Tubbo was being honest, they prettied Tommy up real nice. A nice suit with no wrinkles in sight, pretty flowers and lace, nice makeup that- all tied together, made him look living. Like he was just asleep. He looked more alive than he did back in that hospital bed.

By the time Tubbo had gotten the news of his best friend’s death, they were already wheeling off his body to surgically take away his useful organs and donate them to others in need. This was his first time seeing Tommy since that night in the ICU.

“It was something so much more than love, that we had. We were like soulmates; he was my brother. Even when we fought. In some weird way, Tommy was all I’ve ever known.”

Tubbo didn’t like his speech. He was never good with words, and nothing he could say could put into words the loss he was feeling. It was as if the moment Tommy died, he died too. And he doesn’t know how to go on. He can’t go on, if he’s being honest. But he can’t tell the funeral that, for a multitude of reasons. One of which being that that would be selfish, to take away from Tommy’s moment, one of his final. And the other reason being that they would probably send him to a mental hospital.

“And as I stand here, next to his casket. I don’t know anything anymore.”

Tommy's family was in the audience, near the front, Phil was in tears. Ever since his youngest son's death, Tubbo hadn't seen him not crying. It made him feel a little guilty. Guilty for the lack of tears on his part.

"Tommy was sick long before the pneumonia. He had like, a really bad immune system, and he would get fevers all the time. And every time he got sick, I would come over and watch a movie with him," he looked over to his best friend, sleeping peacefully, "We didn't get to watch a movie this time."

Wilbur, who probably cried the hardest; most hysterical at his brother's death, was stone cold now. Eyes hazy as if he was in another world. The man had shut off, and Tubbo could see himself doing the same soon. Out of all the Watsons, Wilbur and Tommy were by far the closest. Always joking together and causing chaos, comforting each other when one of them was upset. Tommy was the only one Wilbur let listen to him as he fiddled with his guitar; tested out new songs. With Tomm gone, Wilbur had no one left to play to anymore.

"I-"

Even Techno had tears streaming down his face. He was leaned back in his chair, arms crossed tensely. Despite the man being emotionally constipated, he was the one to spend most of the time with Tubbo after everything went down. It was the only thing that reminded him that things didn't go back to normal.

"I don't know what else to say. Sorry."

He felt awkward, wrong up on this podium. Nothing he said felt right, worthy for the circumstances. In all honesty, he didn't think that Tommy would go out this way. The name Tommy Watson was meant to live on forever. And even if it didn't he should have gone out with a bang, something crazy, anything. When Tommy died, the world was supposed to end. A shockwave was supposed to be sent throughout the city, destroying everything in its path.

But it didn't.

Tommy's dying was a passing comment, a piece of news. Even now, people were moving on. *How could they do that?* How could they sit there and think that things could ever be good again?

Stepping away from the podium, he stepped near the casket to say goodbye one last time. Tommy was laying there, asleep. He had to be. He didn't look dead. He looked cozy, and elegant adorned in flowers. And his eyes were closed so gently as he laid there.

Maybe he was just looking down at a ceramic doll. Yea, that's it. His smooth features were just cold stone crafted to *look* like Tommy. Tommy was never really good at art. When they got the clay portion of their curriculum, he was so bad at it he threw his piece at the wall.

*"Tubbo can you help me with this fuckin' tie?"*

*"Tommy, your tie looks fine. Come on, we have to go."*

*“Dude, I can’t get it tight enough. I hate it when these fuckin’ things are too loose.”*

*“If we’re late for this stupid expedition because you couldn’t figure out your tie, then I’m gonna be so pissed at you.”*

Tommy could never figure out how to get his tie tight enough.

Before he could even really think about what he was doing, his hands gently floated up and over to his friend's body. And with a feather light touch, he grabbed onto the tie and tightened it up to the collar.

When he was done, his hands stayed there, wanting to do more. He latched his hands onto one of Tommy’s limp ones, giving it a squeeze. He ignored how cold it was as he pressed their holding hands against his forehead and closed his eyes.

He was never religious like Tommy was. All throughout his childhood, his father would say that God’s a bitch that made him an addict, and Satan was whoever Tubbo’s mother was. So it felt disingenuous to pray for him. He was sure there were a bunch of old ladies doing it on Facebook anyway.

He could feel the funeral patrons' eyes on his back, a bone deep sense of rushing. So he gave his friend’s hand one last time.

It was now or never. Now was the time he had to say his final words to Tommy.

What could he say? What words, what phrase could be big enough? What could be the final seal between the two of them?

He leaned down, and whispered as if Tommy was listening.

“Everything is worse now.”

The rest of the funeral was pretty much what you would expect from a funeral. People standing up and delivering sad, heartfelt speeches, people crying from the audience. All the while, Tubbo just looked at Tommy.

He couldn’t really see him from this angle, only the tip of his nose and some of the flowers that tumbled out of the coffin. But Tommy was *right there* . How could he not look at him?

The coffin looked a lot more comfortable than these stupid chairs, anyway.

And when the service finally ended, and the coffin was swept away on a hearse, everyone filtered out except for the Watsons.

And Tubbo.

He had moved from the chair though. Instead taking up refuge outside on the hill near the funeral home. He sat there, with his arms wrapped around his knees. This stupid suit was stuffy and was too tight around his armpits.

And the grass was wet. And it was cold outside.

Tubbo was miserable.

And then Wilbur Soot was sitting next to him.

The last time he had seen Wilbur wear that suit, it was at one of his chorus performances. He had gotten like all of the solos. And everyone in the Soprano section had scoffed at it, but the man owned the stage. He was made to stand out.

Looking at him now. The man looked like he wanted nothing more than to hide away.

“What do you think it feels like to be set on fire?” Will asked, and Tubbo couldn’t see any semblance of emotion on his face.

Tubbo sniffed, “I think it would hurt a lot. For a really long time.”

“Yea but Tommy can’t really feel it.”

“I got a really bad sunburn once. Maybe that’s what it feels like,” he offered.

Wilbur paused for a really long time. Tubbo almost thought that the conversation was over, but the man began to talk again, “I think this is what it feels like,” he breathed out into the open air in front of them. The vast, expansive land of fields that bled into trees and forest.

Tubbo had no clue what Wilbur was on about. *He* didn’t really feel like he was on fire, sitting here on the top of this hill. In fact, he felt like kind of the opposite.

He felt. . .diluted.

Like watered down paint, like lemonade with too little lemon. He felt as if he was disconnected from everything around him, drowning and there was no way he could get back up.

Wilbur looked sick. He had a cigarette intertwined between his fingers, but Tubbo didn’t blame him. His eyes were red and puffy, and they looked to be diluted as well. Tubbo squinted as he looked at him further.

“Are you high?” he dared to ask.

Wilbur sniffed.

“It kinda feels like I’m dying.”

“Stop being a fucking prick, Wilbur. How did you even get drugs?” Tubbo couldn’t believe him. How could he get high at a funeral? At his *own brother’s* funeral?

“-Look, Tubbo. It’s just- *hard* right now,” Wilbur rubbed his fingers along the arches of his face, going up and down along the nose. And as he sat there, Tubbo didn’t know what to do. He felt betrayed in a sense. And yet there was no energy at all to stop Wilbur.

It was something akin to defeat.

“Where did you get them, Will?”

“I am not giving you drugs, Tubbo.”

“I don’t want to do them, I just want to know where you got them,” Tubbo looked Wilbur straight in the eyes, dreading the answer that he knew would come. Wilbur knew too, and he looked away ashamedly.

“I got them from Schlatt.”

And out of everything, that’s what made the world feel like it’s ending.

Tubbo left Wilbur sitting there as he stood up and meandered back to the funeral home. Phil was still in there, packing up a bunch of the decorations. And next to him, deep into a light conversation, was none other than Tubbo’s own father.

“Hey Tub,” he greeted with something remorseful in his tone, “You ready to go home?” Phil turned around to look at him as well, but Tubbo felt too guilty to analyze his status.

“You sold to Wilbur?” he accused. Schlatt stiffened at the statement, and Phil looked on with equal surprise; his frown deepened, “You’re selling again?”

“Tubbo, I can explain-”

“No you can’t. Cause you did it, didn’t you?” Tubbo could feel his face heating up in anger.



“You sold my son drugs?” Phil sounded angry, “And he *took* them?” Schlatt looked between the two with the most guilt expression someone could muster. Without saying a word, he lightly grabbed onto Tubbo’s shoulder and directed him back outside of the funeral home. Phil didn’t seem to mind being left alone as he walked straight towards the direction of his son.

“Dad, what the fuck?” he hissed, he swatted the man’s hand off of his arm.

“Tubbo I swear it was a one time thing.”

“Why’d you do it in the first place?”

“Because he asked for it-”

“That doesn’t mean you can give him drugs! You could get arrested again. Both of you!”

“He was hurtin’, kid. We’re all hurting.”

“You don’t know *shit* about hurting!” he fumbled for more words, each one getting caught in the air and dying out. All of this and yet, Tubbo didn’t have it in him to fight anymore. He just dropped his arms and stormed over to the car. His father would get the clue eventually.

He slammed the door behind him and slumped down impossibly far into his seat. His body was thrumming with dull energy, bouncing every which way. He needed to *do* something.

And so he took his fists and rapidly punched them against the dashboard. Again and again and again until his hands were throbbing, and even then, he delivered one last blow. There were dents now left on the fake leather surface, but quite frankly, he didn’t care.

He felt frustrated, about everything. Manic and irritated. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

The last time he spoke to Technoblade, he said that things would get better eventually. That there would be up days and down days, sporadically.

And he supposes that today is one of those bad days.

He didn't *want* things to get better. Not when Tommy wasn't here. But he hates how things are this bad.

He wanted to scream. And he wanted to punch something- again. And he wanted to take this car by the wheel and crash it into a tree.

Why did he have to be here? Why was his father selling drugs again, on the day of his best friend's funeral? Why did Tommy have to die? And leave him alone here. Alone in this stupid fucking car.

Everything is worse now.

---

Wilbur Soot, truth be told, was the best musician in the world.

At least, that's what Tommy used to say.

And maybe that was true, but Tubbo wouldn't know. Because Wilbur Soot would only ever play his music for one person on this earth. And that was his very own little brother.

Wilbur had only shown one of his songs to Tubbo once. He was eight years old, and the brunette musician had brought both him and Tommy into his bedroom, a mischievous yet nervous smile on his face. He sat both of them on his bed, and drew out his old guitar. And even back then, Tubbo knew that this was a once in a lifetime experience.

The two young boys looked on with stars in their eyes as he cracked his knuckles and started plucking at the strings. His voice was sweet and methodical as he sang about a place that could only be seen in your dreams.

La Jolla.

When Tubbo had asked about why he made a song about the place, the older had talked about this certain bridge. It was out of the way, and only a few knew about it. It was covered in graffiti, and looked out towards the ocean.

Such a simple thing to make a song about, and yet Wilbur did. And that stuck with them.

So much that La Jolla was the final destination on their list.

“California really is a pretty state if you know where to go,” Ranboo commented from where he looked out of the moving vehicle window.

Tubbo’s journey checking off the bucket list started on a bus, and ended on a bus.

“I’ve never been here before,” Tubbo commented, his mind elsewhere as he clutched onto the backpack on his lap.

“Well duh. I used to live here for a couple of years. I had a bunch of surfing friends. They were like, sunburned all the time. As if skin cancer doesn’t exist.”

“It’s a lot less snowy than the ski hills.”

“Yea, it doesn’t really get that cold here,” a silence followed that almost felt odd to occur in the middle of the conversation. Usually tangents between the two of them would just go on and on, bouncing between point and point, but this one just dropped. And Ranboo took notice of that, “Hey, are you alright?” he asked quietly.

Tubbo looked over to him, and then back at the seat in front of him. He could feel the urn inside of the backpack, it felt emptier than it did before, “Yea, I’m just thinking about something.”

“Do you want to talk about it?” Ranboo urged lightly, though Tubbo knew that if he wanted to drop it, Ranboo would let him. It was one of the things that made Ranboo better than him.

“It’s new years eve,” he started. Ranboo nodded, affirming the information, “2020 is almost over.”

“Are you excited about it?” Ranboo asked, “Surely next year has to be better.”

Tubbo paused to sort out his thoughts before he continued, “It’s- Tommy died this year. Tomorrow, in a couple of hours, we will be in a year *without* Tommy. He- Tommy will never see 2021. There will just be no Tommy next year. -It feels weird.”

He stumbled over the words, but hopefully he got his message through. By the way Ranboo was looking at him, he probably did.

Ranboo slid his hand over and held it in Tubbo’s, detaching him from his grip around the bag.

“Maybe this is a good chance to let everything go. Not just Tommy’s death, but *everything* .”

“ . . . But if I let it all go, then did anything that ever happened before have any importance?” He asked earnestly, as if Ranboo had all the answers in the world.

“Sometimes you gotta be selfish. If you don’t move past every bad thing that happened, then you won’t survive.”

“But I don’t want to leave Tommy in 2020, I don’t want to leave him here.”

“Tubbo, you can leave yourself here either,” Ranboo looked him in the eyes, “You can’t let Tommy’s death define him.”

Tubbo nodded and thought on that. If all he ever thought about- if his mind was only plagued with thoughts about Tommy’s death, then all he would ever be is dead.

The bus settled to a stop with a hiss and a wavering shift. That was their cue to leave.

The two teen boys shimmied their way out of the bus and out onto the humid land of La Jolla. The sun- already beginning to set- was beating down on them, creating the absolute opposite feeling you would want to go for in the middle of winter.

Winter. . .

Did the Watson’s celebrate Christmas this year? Did his father? Could the cheery holiday even be the same without-

No, he needs to stop thinking about Tommy’s death.

It didn’t take long to get to the secret spot that Wilbur described all those years ago, and somehow, it was everything that Tubbo imagined. It was quaint, it was quiet, and it almost looked like a work of art.

But maybe, just maybe, Tubbo had become so disillusioned with reality, that everything looked like a work of art.

The spray paint was vibrant from where it was artfully splattered against the stone brick of the underneath bridge. It was a good contrast between the dull colors of the flora around it. Lazy ocean waves lapped against the shore, licking at the warm sand. The setting sun in the

sky was just about kissing the line where the sky meets the sea. It was as if everything leading up to this moment was just that.

A ‘something’ leading up to this very moment.

Tubbo met Ranboo where he was sitting cross legged on the sand. On his descent, he set out the urn in front of him, but then shuffled through his backpack for more. He searched until his fingertips crossed over the feeling of an old piece of paper.

Carefully, he took out the very list that him and Tommy crafted all those years ago. He marveled at its work, tracing his fingers along the surface. The paper had yellowed with age.

“I’ve been thinking about something,” he started, and Ranboo looked over at him curiously. It was strangely reminiscent of the first time they met, back at the Grand Canyon, “And stop me if I sound insane.”

“Everything you say sounds insane, Tubbo. But go ahead,” Ranboo offered, trying gently to keep up their joking nature, yet still telling that now was not necessarily the time.

Tubbo breathed out.

“I think- this bucket list- was meant to be complete with only one of us,” he started out with the bold claim, “Like *this* was Tommy’s last thing for me; his last message for me. His- he left me off with this. Like this is here when he wasn’t.”

He looked at the scribbled words on the pages, all done in crayon.

“And clearly that’s not what we were thinking when we made it. We were kids and we wanted to travel around some countries. But I think the point still stands. And I think the same would have gone if I was the one that died.”

Ranboo looked over at him, but had no input to share.

“And the list is almost done.”

There was a palpable silence, and then Ranboo asked, “What are you gonna do after this?”

“Keep going, I guess. But I don’t think I’ll ever learn how to move on from this,” Tubbo looked up to the sky, it was getting dark out now, “I’ll go back home, and face all the shit I started there. Go back to school, get a job maybe. I wanna rekindle some old friendships,” and then over to Ranboo, “How about you?”

“I think I’ll stay with my grandfather for a while. But I think I want to move to England.”

“Really?”

“Yea, get a change of pace.”

“So this all ends after tonight.”

“It does.”

“And then we’ll have to part ways.”

“For now,” Ranboo reassured.

And then Tubbo would be alone again. Back in England, with people who were equally as alone.

He was scared, to be alone again. But that was the beauty of things, wasn't it? The fact that it's temporary.

He looked down at his phone, there was but a couple of minutes until midnight. It was already far into the new year in England, but Tubbo was still here. Maybe it was metaphorical, but Tubbo was tired of trying to make things make sense.

The two boys stood up, urn in hand. It was a silent exchange as Tubbo unscrewed the top, and stepped out into the tides. The water was cold against his bare feet, and the air brushed against his face.

And tonight, it felt like the end of something.

The clock clicked down, Ranboo a comforting force right next to him. He looked out solemnly in front of himself. Maybe tonight was an end for Ranboo as well.

Cause the two of them had a really, really shitty year.

And yet, he wasn't ready for it to end.

*5. . . Tubbo lies in his bed, fighting the last reminiscence of sleep when Tommy texts him, telling him to come over.*

*4. . . Tommy comforts Tubbo as he frets over his English test grade.*

*3. . . Tommy and Tubbo hug each other in the backseat of the car as Wilbur takes it for a test ride for the first time.*

*2. . . Tubbo manages to burn soup as he's trying to comfort Tommy, who's sick yet again.*



1. . .

*'Remember Tubbo, you gotta be a little more careful with Tommy right now. No roughhousing, okay?'*

*Tubbo barely listened to his father as he ran over to his friend waiting in the grass of the front lawn. Tommy looked a little smaller than usual, but that was no big deal. His father said that they were both still young and that they would both grow big and strong one day.*

*Though he did take his father's words to heart as he hugged Tommy more gently than usual.*

*"Come on Tub! Let's go play by the stream!" Tommy hugged back.*

*"But I thought we were supposed to be gentle today," Tubbo objected. That's what the adults have told him, and you're always supposed to listen to adults.*

*And yet, Tommy scoffed, "They're being over dramatic! I'm not sick anymore."*

*"But Tommy!"*

*"We can't just live life not doing what we want. That's what Wilbur says."*

*Tubbo hummed, "Alright."*

And then the last bits of Tommy's ashes were flying down into the gentle sea of La Jolla, to be cradled and carried away.

It was the new year, and Tommy was gone.

Tubbo's eyes burned. So did his mouth, and his chest, and suddenly he was shaking.

He sniffed, and he sucked in a breath of air.

And then he let out a sob.

And Tubbo cried.

And he cried, and cried, and he cried. He cried for the loss he had experienced, what he would never get back, and he cried for all the pain that led up to now.

Hot tears steamrolled down his face, dropping down to the ocean waves as well.

He felt something encompass him in an embrace, hugging him close and yet not touching him at all.

And then Ranboo's arms were around him, encompassing and comforting. And at some point Tubbo had turned around and buried his face into Ranboo's chest.

It was the new year, and tears fell free. The bucket list was completed, the ashes were gone, and it was time to go home.

Tommy was dead, and Tubbo was crying.

And things would get better, starting now.

---

Tommy and Tubbo knew every square inch of their small hometown, to the point where it became boring. And there was always one special spot that they would go to watch the sun set.

And though it wasn't the best part of the year, that's where the two found themselves on the night of Tommy's sixteenth birthday.

The party beforehand was nice, a small get together between family, but Tubbo noticed- of course he noticed- that his friend had been more quiet than usual. He could tell that tenfold when the two of them made it to the bench, and no words were exchanged between the two.

Tommy just sat there, with his knees drawn up to his chest, his arms wrapped around his legs, and his eyes staring out to the town in front of them.

"Do you ever feel like you're trapped?" he asked.

"I dunno," he answered truthfully.

Tommy breathed.

"I think we'll make it out of here one day. I do."

"Where would we go?"

"Everywhere. Away," Tommy leaned back in his seat, looking up at the stars flickering above, "Wilbur always talks about finding the meaning of life- mostly when he's smoking- but he talks about it, and I think about it."

"Do you think life has a meaning?" Tubbo asked, looking over.

Tommy hummed, "I dunno," his eyes, alive and glowing, traced over every constellation in the sky.

“But I think this is it.”

## Chapter End Notes

And here it is! The last chapter, after a couple of months. There are some things I could have changed with this chapter, and it is a little bit rushed, but overall I am very proud of this story. It is the first one on here, and ever, that i've actually finished. So thank you for reading this, enjoying this, and supporting this story.

Until next time~

## End Notes

City of lights- the music tapes

Pigeon- cavetown

Kids- Current Joys

Little talks- of monsters and men

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!